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EDITORIAL

## BANKRUPTCIES: FISCAL, MORAL

Eight years ago, during the last severe recession in the American economy, 20,000 companies filed for bankruptcy. This year the rate of bankruptcies is so high that if it continues as it has in the first three months—as most economists expect—more than 70,000 companies will go under.

Business failures are occurring today at an annual rate of 80 per 10,000 companies, the highest rate since the record year of 1933, when the rate was 100 per 10,000. "A bankruptcy epidemic is sweeping American business," says *The Wall Street Journal*, "and there is no letup in sight."

Braniff has gone belly-up. So have AM International and Lionel and Brentano's. Companies large and small in steel, agribusiness, auto parts, transportation, farm machinery, construction and even energy and electronics are dying off.

What does it all mean? you ask. Well, in a sense it is a reflection of the Federal Reserve's tight-money rulings and the resultant astronomical interest rates: many companies simply can't generate enough profits to pay off the 18 and 20 percent loans they incurred. Since 1979, bankruptcies have gone up by 153 percent.

But in a larger sense it is a reflection of the lack of any pretense of democratic planning in corporate America to take account of moral values and social needs. The corporate mentality, in whose recesses the drive for short-term profit above all else has become obsessive, finds it not only expedient but eminently rational to invest and build overseas at whatever cost to the American economy; to acquire companies by merger, bleed them dry and liquidate them; to invest in money markets rather than in new plants; to diversify into new businesses rather than modernize aging ones; to seek, in short, the highest return regardless of the consequences.

It is a bankrupt policy and we are seeing its absolutely predictable results: bankruptcies.


TOWARD A NO-GROWTH ECONOMY
Arnold Simoni

ORGANIZING IMMIGRANT LABOR
Steve Early

THE FLOAT: HOW BANKS MAKE MONEY
Wendy Cooper

HIGHBROWS AND POP CULTURE
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Christopher Hitchens


LAWRENCE LIVERMORE LABS

## BUILDING THE U.S. ARSENAL

MARCY DARNOVSKY

Hidden among the rolling hills of Livermore Valley, twe[illegible]f Oakland, is a small modern for[illegible]by one of the largest police force[illegible] California. At first glance, it is an unimposing sight: several hundred acres of brick buildings with an almost academic innocence. But inside are the spawning grounds for half the nation's nuclear arsenal, a place that could, according to its critics, unleash an uncontrollable nuclear accident.

The fortress is Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, a government complex staffed by 7,200 scientists, technicians and laborers, with an annual operating budget of nearly $600 million. Stored within a single building at the lab are hundreds of pounds of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium. It is here at Livermore, and at the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in New Mexico, that government scientists have painstakingly designed every nuclear weapon in the U.S. arsenal.

In addition to its complex of office buildings and laboratories near the town of Livermore, the national laboratory runs a nonnuclear test range called Site 300 about fifteen miles away, as well as part of the Nevada Test Site near Las Vegas, where an estimated twenty nuclear bombs are exploded underground annually. A weapons laboratory operated by the Sandia Corporation is located just across the road from the Livermore complex.

The weapons labs take pride in their role as the nation's nuclear weapons brain trust. Lawrence Livermore's award-winning public-relations office regularly churns out pamphlets featuring photographs of shiny machinery, dedicated

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# LETTERS.

## ARGENTINE ANTI-SEMITISM

*Fayetteville, Ark.*

When I read the editorial "Falkland Fever" [*The Nation*, April 17], I was brought to a solid stop by the phrase "Argentina, already stinking internationally for its anti-Semitic frenzy . . ." There is one possible source for this statement: Jacobo Timerman, author of *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*.

My wife is Argentine and Jewish. She has been affected by what the editorial calls the "massacre of dissidents" (which has not been a massacre so much as a cruelly orchestrated political inquisition), and could relate stories that would make even the butch-waxed hair of Ronald Reagan stand on end; but she has not suffered one moment of anti-Semitism, even while under arrest and questioning. She was riled by Timerman's Zionist tract. He dishonored by silence the thousands of non-Jews exiled or killed, as well as the pre-eminently nonracist ideal of Argentina.

Buenos Aires is as Jewish as New York City. How could this "anti-Semitic frenzy" have completely escaped my wife's attention? Her answer to Timerman's international outcry is that he was a fool to take seriously the insults of his torturers. It was his typical Zionist paranoia that his "questioners" seized on as his point of sensitivity. For a young, light-skinned, wealthy Spanish friend of ours (incarcerated blindfolded for thirty days, given electrical shocks and regular beatings), they used family and class background as a weapon of insult and attempted humiliation (unsuccessfully, I have to add). The point is that Timerman used his unfortunate predicament to further his own political ideas. However, to create the impression of a pogrom in Argentina is possible only among those completely uninformed as to the truly monstrous and arbitrary nature of the actual events.

*Stephen Marquardt*

## REPLY

*Stephen Marquardt might want to consult the principal Argentine human rights organizations such as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the Center for Legal and Social Studies, which fully support Jacobo Timerman's charges about Argentine anti-Semitism. Also, we can refer Marquardt to the Latin American Affairs Department of the Anti-Defamation League, which monitors Argentine anti-Semitism. The department's director, Rabbi Morton Rosenthal, has frequently pointed out that though the Argentine authorities were able to destroy one of the world's most sophisticated urban guerrilla movements, they have never been able to arrest anyone in connection with one of the countless incidents in which synagogues and other Jewish institutions were destroyed or vandalized.*

*Also, we express our own dislike for the phrase "typical Zionist paranoia." However it is intended, it has an unfortunate ring.*

*—The Editors*

## NIGERIAN CHAOS

*Madison, Wis.*

As a friend of Nigeria who holds no brief for any one political party there, I strongly object to the inflammatory tone and misleading content of Robert Irwin's article, "Nigeria Creeps Toward Chaos" [*The Nation*, April 10]. I would never question the right of a political analyst to give outspoken warnings about the dangers of injustice, but this right is abused when, on the basis of a superficial acquaintance with a situation, he allows his imagination to run riot.

To a reader such as myself, who happens to have lived in Nigeria and studied Nigerian affairs, it seems quite bizarre that Irwin could project an "Iranian" crisis in a country where the ruling party (which he casually identifies with the "elite") draws its main support from that part of the country that is most closely identified with Islam, the far north. So strong are the links between the secular and the religious authorities in this area that a cleavage on the Iranian scale is hardly conceivable. Occasional millenarian movements in the area have been noted for their isolated character and lack of mass support.

The article in any case casts the political parties in fictitious social roles. Whereas the Great Nigeria People's Party, the United Party of Nigeria and the factions of the People's Redemption Party do use a slightly more egalitarian rhetoric than the ruling National Party of Nigeria, Irwin's attempt to characterize the disagreements between the N.P.N. and other parties as elite versus mass is simply absurd. None of the parties are innocent of elite self-seeking, and the N.P.N. has as much support from the poor as any other. Are we supposed to believe that the flame of a popular revolt will be ignited by that past master of oligarchic intrigue, Chief Awolowo? A less likely candidate for the role of ayatollah could hardly be imagined!

*James Urwick*

## IRWIN REPLIES

*New York City*

James Urwick makes the same mistake that *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and the State Department do in failing to perceive the depth and the explosive potential of class cleavage in contemporary Nigerian politics. Admittedly, this cleavage is blurred by the fact that all of the major parties have significant bourgeois elements and that "none are innocent of elite self-seeking," as Urwick puts it. But the National Party of Nigeria has established itself on a national scale as the party of big business and the ally of foreign capital. To ignore this is to fail to grasp one of the most profoundly important (and, in Nigeria, widely understood) features of politics in the Second Republic.

Corruption is pervasive in Nigeria, and no party can claim to have clean hands. But it is both false and fatuous to maintain that all hands are equally dirty. The *degree* of corruption matters—economically, socially and politically—and the evidence suggests that leading members of the ruling party have enriched themselves with a greed that is peculiarly brazen, cynical and damaging to the legitimacy of the democratic regime. This self-seeking has spilled over into abuses of federal power to thwart the opposition, abuses which further imperil democracy and call into question the N.P.N.'s capacity to survive the 1983 elections. To ignore these trends lends no credence to a claim of friendship for Nigeria or impartiality in its politics.

As to the north, it is there that class conflict is deepest and most threatens to tear the whole political system asunder. It is manifestly false to suggest that the N.P.N. has as much support from the poor in the north as any other party. It is identified with a corrupt, feudalistic and oppressive status quo that all of the other parties have been mobilizing against. In the two most politically strategic states in the north, the N.P.N. lost the governorships in 1979 to a radical party that was late in getting organized and poorly financed. As the cleavage in the north deepens between the "forces of privilege" and the "forces of change," the N.P.N. will likely lose further ground there in a free and fair election.

Finally, as regards the Iranian analogy, James Urwick has missed the point. Apologists for failed American policies are never short of reasons why historical lessons need not be learned, why El Salvadors are not Vietnams. The danger in Nigeria is not that some new, crazed ayatollah will come to power, or even that the revolutionary pressure may have an Islamic fundamentalist component. Islam can be turned against the status quo in the same way as it has been mobilized to legitimate it, and the P.R.P. is now attempting the former. But the key point is that revolutionary pressure *is* building in northern Nigeria as the forces of development heighten the north's central conflict: that between an aristocratic ruling class and a peasantry that is awakening from centuries of exploitation. It is an explosive situation, and if we fail to perceive it and to properly distance ourselves from the social and political order it is eroding, we will risk repeating the fundamental error of our policy in Iran.

*Robert Irwin*

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# EDITORIALS.

## Follow the Leader

It is a pathetic truism that the country is always ahead of Congress. What's tragic is that sometimes Congress never catches up.

Recently, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted for a Reagan-backed extension of military aid to El Salvador, thus assuring the prolonging of the fighting until at least October 1983. And just to be sure that the turmoil will be bloody as well as long, it decided to increase the amount of our largesse from $25 million to $60 million. The vote was 21 to 15.

Ignored, as usual, were the results of three recent opinion polls in which a decisive majority called for an end to all American military aid to El Salvador: 63 percent in a *New York Times* poll, 60 percent in a *Newsweek* survey and 72 percent in a *Washington Post* poll. When Representative Benjamin Rosenthal tried to embody this sentiment in a proposal to suspend all military aid, his motion was defeated, 25 to 8.

In the other place, as they say, a far more sensible position has emerged. In response to the actions of El Salvador's new Constituent Assembly in annulling the land reforms enacted by the Duarte government, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted not to increase military aid for next year. Unless the land reforms remain intact, said the committee chairman, Charles Percy, "not one cent of funds" shall go to El Salvador.

This is an action which reflects not only the opinion of the American people but the spirit of the law under which aid to El Salvador is given. That law says very plainly that unless the President can certify that El Salvador is achieving essential reforms—including land reform—Congress is to prohibit further military aid. One can only hope that Congress as a whole will not swerve from that commitment, as the

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House committee has apparently done, and that those who presume to be our leaders show as much wisdom as the citizenry that is actually the leader.

# The U.S. Burden

Every sort of miscalculation by all the parties dogs the efforts to end that nasty little war in the Falklands. This country can now do little about the virile fantasies afflicting General Galtieri and Prime Minister Thatcher. But we should brood about the ways in which Washington has compounded the fatal confusions.

Until the occupation of the islands on April 2, the goal of Reagan's policy had been to enlist Argentine "authoritarian" military aid against Central American "totalitarian" revolutionaries. It could well be argued that this courting of the Argentine dictatorship made it feel free to launch its colonial (anti-colonial?) venture in the Falklands.

The encouragement of British intransigence was more indirect, but it too had to do with Reagan's anti-Communist postures: Britain was on the verge of scrapping much of the fleet now making do in the South Atlantic in order to beef up its anti-Soviet capabilities with Trident submarines. Now it can use up the fleet, assisted by Argentine missiles, make its show of strength in Falkland Sound and still get its new, with-it submarines.

So the burden on Washington is substantial, and it cannot be any comfort that the most immediate result for the United States has been the swift and rabid expression of anti-Americanism throughout Latin America. The best that we can wrest from the situation is the newly cemented closeness with Britain—and that in turn gives us what could be the only real lever to force the British into serious negotiations at the United Nations. For it is upon that institution, which we've done so much to weaken by a policy of sneering neglect, that the chances for peace depend.

# Nicaragua Report

One can easily reject the picture of Nicaragua as a brutal totalitarian state offered periodically by the Reagan Administration and still feel a legitimate concern over the progress of civil liberties in that country since the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979. And happily, a new document, an eighty-seven-page report by two lawyers from the Americas Watch Committee—an affiliate of the Helsinki Watch Committee—has just been issued which gives us our clearest assessment to date of the human rights performance of the Sandinist government.

Among its findings:

The government has eliminated torture (despite contrary allegations in the State Department's "Country Reports on Human Rights" for 1981) and is making headway in reestablishing a fair and independent judiciary. By U.S. standards, prison conditions and pretrial interrogation practices remain harsh, however. Isolated instances of extralegal arrests, disappearances and illegal executions have continued to take place in provincial areas, but these do not seem to be part of any government campaign to eliminate or terrorize the opposition, as they are in several other Latin American countries. An opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*, and several opposition political parties and labor unions are permitted to operate, but their rights to communicate with the people are severely restricted.

Nearly half of the report—written by Stephen L. Kass, a partner in a New York City law firm, and Juan E. Mendez, the director of the Washington office of the Americas Watch Committee—examines the complex conflict between the Sandinist government and the Miskito Indians of the northeast. This is an issue of great sensitivity to the Nicaraguans on two counts. First, the Reagan Administration and a hostile Western press have been quick to seize on the tensions between the Indians and the Sandinists as a way of "destabilizing" the government; second, armed Somocistas and other right-wing exiles have concentrated their attacks in the Miskito border regions and attempted to use Indian dissatisfactions for their own purposes.

The report rejects allegations made by the Reagan Administration that the forcible relocation of the Miskitos by the Nicaraguan government this past January and February was intended to punish them for failing to adhere to the Sandinist revolution; and it also rejects a Nicaraguan government claim that the relocation was carried out to protect the Miskitos against raids by Somocistas based in Honduras. The purpose of the relocation, according to the report, was actually to make it possible for Nicaragua to defend its border more effectively.

A direct, severe and imminent threat to a nation's security may be a permissible ground for evacuating a border area, the Americas Watch team goes on to argue, though the use of racial, religious and ethnic classifications (such as the United States used in relocating Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II) is never permissible. Even when justified, however, certain human rights procedures must be followed. Those affected by relocation should be able to take part in hearings before an impartial judicial body that would consider whether relocation is necessary; they are entitled to as much notice as possible; they should be given adequate transportation and assistance in moving personal possessions; and families should be aided in staying together.

Frequent violent raids across the border from Honduras may have justified the relocation itself, the report says, but not the failure to follow these procedures. Though the government of Nicaragua provided temporary housing for the 8,500 resettled Miskitos in four large camps, it has effectively denied them the opportunity to settle anyplace else in the country. The report calls on the Nicaraguan government to compensate the Miskitos for their losses and to aid them in rebuilding their homes and communities as soon as the military emergency ends. It also notes that "continuing support for [Somocistas and other right-wing guerrillas] by the United States and Honduras must ultimately require those

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states to bear a measure of responsibility, together with Nicaragua, for the inability of the Miskito people to return to their former homes and villages."

Kass and Mendez report that they found no evidence to verify allegations that had circulated in the United States that the relocation was accompanied by the massacre of hundreds of Miskitos. On the other hand, through extensive interviews with Miskitos in Managua, in all of the resettlement camps in Nicaragua and in Honduras, they received a number of detailed hearsay accounts of a massacre that supposedly occurred a few weeks prior to the relocation in the border town of Leimus. The incident apparently involved some seventy to eighty mineworkers detained by military authorities after their mine had been robbed by an anti-government band. Although the mineworkers were not charged in connection with the robbery, they were allegedly separated into groups and, over a two- or three-day period, some forty or fifty were executed. A similar incident involving five or six Miskitos allegedly occurred at the village of San Carlos. Kass and Mendez write, "We emphasize that we are not in a position to determine the truthfulness of these charges," and they call on the Nicaraguan government to conduct a "prompt, forthright and thorough investigation."

Interestingly, the government of Nicaragua has recently announced that it is indeed investigating the Leimus episode, a fact that should be noted by critics of the Nicaraguan political experiment. It is a unique situation: the Sandinist government was born out of violent revolution only a couple of years ago. Extensive social reforms are taking place internally—including what is said to be a highly successful literacy campaign—while externally the government is the target of an American destabilization policy, complete with covert hit squads, the withdrawal of financial credit and threats of blockades. That the Sandinists, in the midst of all this, are troubled enough by their unhappy relations with the Miskitos to undertake an investigation is a sign that things could be a lot worse for civil liberties in Nicaragua.

# C.I.A.: Carcinogen

The multi-million-dollar project of the Central Intelligence Agency to develop and test psychotropic drugs has been known for some years now, but details of its bizarre intrigues are still trickling out. Documents recently pried loose by the Freedom of Information Act show that during the height of the cold war, the C.I.A. developed cancer-causing drugs to use in assassinating political opponents so it would appear that they died from natural causes.

A C.I.A. memorandum of February 4, 1952, reports on the carcinogenic properties of beryllium: "This is certainly the most toxic inorganic element and it produces a peculiar fibrotic tumor at the site of local application. The amount necessary to produce these tumors is a few micrograms." The document goes on to recommend a study on "the effect of inhaling small amounts of beryllium in the lungs, and other studies to evaluate the potentialities of beryllium as a covert weapon."

The memorandum also reports that the C.I.A. had laboratory facilities for "any type of medical research involving physiologically active chemical compounds," and it assured C.I.A. doctors that "human subjects would be available for work that could be carried out as legitimate medical research."

Another document, dated August 4, 1954, describes a drug called methylcholanthrene as "probably the most potent known carcinogen in the production of tumors of various types." The drug could be used as an "initiating agent" leading "to a palpable cancerous proliferation after an induction period during which the initiating agent may have been eliminated from the system."

This cancer scheme was only one of hundreds pursued by the C.I.A. during its twenty-five-year effort to develop techniques to control human behavior. Some of the more sensational aspects of this program, such as the testing of LSD on unwitting American citizens, were investigated by Congress and reported by the press in the 1970s. In *The Search for the Manchurian Candidate: The CIA & Mind Control*, John Marks told of other C.I.A. experiments with sensory deprivation, sleep teaching, parapsychology, subliminal perception, electronic brain stimulation and similarly arcane methods of mind control.

In addition to the cancer venture, newly released documents also show how the C.I.A. used "anticancer" research as a cover for its behavior-alteration studies. In an experiment at Georgetown University, the agency tested anticancer drugs as knockout substances and incapacitating agents. One document indicates that a "pool of subjects" would be made available in order to evaluate "the cardiovascular and anti-carcinogenic effects of compounds." In this case, the pool of subjects consisted of terminal cancer patients who had no idea they were being used as guinea pigs in a C.I.A. drug project. MARTIN A. LEE

*Martin A. Lee, a freelance writer in San Francisco, is finishing a book entitled* The CIA and the Acid Generation: The Secret History of LSD.

# Imbalancing Act

*Washington, May 25*

In discussing "destabilizing weapons" the other day, President Reagan made not one but two errors. One was quickly caught by most of the press; the other went unnoticed.

Reagan said the main emphasis of START would be the reduction of intercontinental ballistic missiles because their warheads, unlike those fired from bombers, ships or submarines, cannot be recalled: "There is no stopping them." That error is patent. Of course, bombers, ships or submarines themselves can be recalled before they fire, but their bombs or missiles, once set off, are no more recalla-

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ble than warheads from land-based ICBMs.

But Reagan's bigger error lies in failing to understand why land-based ICBMs are the most destabilizing weapons. A simple example will illustrate what makes them so upsetting.

Let us imagine that after months of haggling the United States and Russia agreed to reduce their land-based missiles to just one on each side. This one would of course be the best, the most modern, and would therefore have quite a few MIRV warheads—say ten, the limit in SALT II. Let us also say each warhead had the best accuracy now available, so that it would take only two attacking warheads to knock out the other side's ICBM if they attacked first.

So even with only one modern ICBM on each side, the situation would still be destabilizing because the side that shot first would destroy the other side's weapon, unless the other launched its own ICBM at the first hint of a coming attack (what the experts call launch-on-warning). The temptation to strike first would exist whether each side had one or one thousand ICBMs. The MIRVed ICBM is like a six-shooter—he who shoots first wins over the one who is slow on the draw. Moreover, the land-based ICBM is destabilizing because it is vulnerable. It is plainly visible, a skyscraper of a target, and it is open to a pre-emptive attack through MIRV targeting and the present state of "hard target accuracy."

Reagan—who has also been learning—touched on another reason that the present situation is destabilizing: the danger of miscalculation. These monsters depend on computers and radar sensors, and we have learned that these are often defective. So undependable is such technology that even two old hawks like Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia and Senator Henry Jackson of Washington have been urging a joint U.S.-Soviet crisis-control center, manned twenty-four hours a day, to protect both sides from slip-ups.

The frequency of technical error was brought vividly to light in recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings. Senator Mark Hatfield testified (May 11) that "during the past twenty months U.S. computer malfunction has falsely signaled a Soviet strategic attack 147 times." Senator Gary Hart reported (May 12) that in 1980 he and Senator Barry Goldwater ran a bipartisan investigation for the Senate Armed Services Committee which found that in an eighteen-month period, NORAD (the North American Defense Command) experienced 151 false alarms of a Soviet attack.

The recognition of a common enemy in the inexorable onrush of nuclear weapons technology also led William E. Colby, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Herbert Scoville Jr., former deputy director of the C.I.A. for research and development, to endorse a nuclear freeze at those same Foreign Relations hearings (May 13). Colby testified that both superpowers could "benefit from stopping the mindless piling up of more of these terrible weapons." Scoville said that a freeze on "testing, production and deployment" of nuclear weapons and delivery systems could "end the technological arms race and lead to significant reductions."

In the wake of Brezhnev's agreement to negotiate and his proposal for a freeze while the talks go on, *Reader's Digest* ran full-page ads in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* picturing the freeze movement as—you might have guessed it—a Red Plot. But hard-liners in Moscow may see it as an American plot. Not only was a freeze originally suggested to Brezhnev by Jimmy Carter in 1979 but, more seriously, the Reagan proposal, if unamended, would create a serious imbalance for the Russians.

It starts with warheads. Under Reagan's START proposal, each side would be limited to 5,000 warheads, though both sides would move toward their "best" weapons in conforming to this ceiling. (That would mean the MX and Trident II on our side and up-to-date monsters like the SS-18 on the other.) The result would be fewer ICBMs on both sides but many more MIRV warheads—and this would mean more instability because an attacker would have fewer targets and more warheads per target than at present. According to Scoville's figuring, the Soviet Union now has four warheads with which it can hit each U.S. launcher. Under SALT II it can build up to a 6-to-1 advantage. Under START, the Russians would have twelve warheads for each target. So we would be better off, Scoville argues, with a freeze now (4 to 1) or under SALT II (6 to 1) than under START (12 to 1).

But the figures as seen from Moscow are worse. The United States with its MX and Trident II missiles would have twenty warheads with which to hit each Soviet launcher, as against twelve for the Russians. And the imbalance is worse if we go beyond the ICBMs. The United States has a superiority in both long-range bombers (we have some 2,000 more bomb "loadings" than the Russians) and in cruise missiles. Moreover, as Representative Albert Gore Jr. pointed out in setting forth a plan of his own in the *Congressional Record* of May 13, the United States is far ahead in submarine technology. Trident II will have sufficient accuracy for a first strike against Soviet military targets and command posts. But the Soviet Union, according to Gore, does not have a "hard target capability" on its submarines, and they can be used only as a second-strike deterrent, not as a first-strike threat.

Under the START levels, the Soviet Union would be mad to attack U.S. land-based missiles because it could be destroyed many times over by U.S. submarine missiles, bombers and cruise missiles. But a first strike at Soviet land-based missiles might be tempting (though only a little less insane) to our side because three-fourths of Soviet ICBM power is in vulnerable land-based missiles, while only one-fourth of ours is land-based.

If both sides were playing chess, not war, this would be enough to force the Russians to resign. But it's not chess. This fundamental and overwhelming imbalance is what makes Reagan's START terms acceptable to all but the nuttiest hawks on our side. In effect it freezes them but not us. One cannot expect the other side to accept this imbalance.

That means prolonged and complicated negotiations. But without a freeze new destabilizing monsters will emerge from the laboratories long before the painful bargaining is ended.

I. F. STONE

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# ARTICLES.

FROM 'MORE' TO 'BETTER'

# Three Steps to a No-Growth Economy

ARNOLD SIMONI

Two of the chronic problems of a growth economy such as ours are unemployment and overproduction. Yet it is strange that we should regard them as problems: "unemployment" and "overproduction" are, after all, simply other ways of saying leisure and plenty. In fact, it is only our commitment to ceaseless growth and to the economic mechanisms through which growth is achieved that forces us to see these matters in such a dubious light. The irony is immense: our relentless pursuit of growth robs us of what ought to be the chief benefits of the technological revolution that has made growth possible.

There is no doubt about the general affluence of the American economy, despite its current setbacks, and its achievement in securing for us all a level of physical security and comfort scarcely imaginable in any earlier time. However, the real work of our society is accomplished by a small, and indeed a diminishing, proportion of the work force: although Americans put in about a billion hours on the job every working day, only an estimated 7 percent of this work time is devoted to the direct production of goods. The rest is devoted to services, some of which are perhaps essential to the production and marketing of goods but a great many of which are plainly nothing more than feather-bedding. Still, the accomplishment of that small segment of the economy is such that—even after devoting an enormous share of the national output to military hardware, exports and the support of public and corporate bureaucracies—we have been obliged to cultivate habits of waste and a certain taste for the meretricious to consume what it is able to yield.

In short, there is a good deal of mere excess in our growth economy, superfluities of both production and work time that sustain a system devoted to the production of more and more rather than better and better. If we can find ways to slough off this excess, we will have gone far toward establishing a sustainable, no-growth economy, and I would like to propose three ways by which such an economy could come about: the reduction of work time, the creation of a minimum base income for all and the establishment of self-contained restrictive trade zones.

I should preface this, however, by emphasizing that I do not think such changes will be possible to enact until after a serious economic crisis—a crisis I am certain our present growth policies will inevitably bring about—and a general public realization that fundamentally new approaches are essential to consider. Nevertheless, I believe these proposals could be implemented without putting intolerable strains on our resources, our notions of political propriety or our capacities for sacrifice.

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## Reducing Work Time

Given the small base of our present productivity, a reduction in the workweek from the present average of about thirty-six hours to no more than twenty hours would not impair industry's ability to keep us in relative comfort, even though it might oblige us to temper our expectations in certain respects. In return for this limited sacrifice, we would finally obtain the enormous boon of substantial leisure. For the first time in history, most of our waking hours would be ours to dispose of as we please.

We could even use some of this time to compensate for the reduction in our standard of living, and discover new satisfactions while we are at it. Given the specialization and regimentation of labor demanded by industrialism, our economy proceeds much of the time by a kind of wasteful and even grotesque indirection. For example, a man who wants a house spends his days in alienating and monotonous work in order to earn the money to pay someone else to build the house. He might find it cheaper and more agreeable to build his house himself, and a twenty-hour workweek would give him the time to try. If the leisured worker has no taste for architecture, he might recover the vanished satisfaction of directly productive work—and compensate for his loss of income—by growing his family's food, building his own furniture or repairing his car.

Whatever his choice, it would be *his* choice. Thus workers would themselves set the limits of their economic lives, a privilege lost to the majority of workers in Europe and America when the industrial revolution compelled our ancestors to trade the small freehold, the one-man shop and the relative independence of cottage industry for the ironclad routine of factory and office.

The success of a shortened workweek would depend on the creation of a mechanism to insure universal observance of the twenty-hour limit—perhaps requiring employers to pay prohibitively stiff bonuses for overtime. (This does not mean that government would have to get into the act; workers themselves could enforce the arrangement through contracts with employers.) To avoid inequities, there would also have to be a consistent policy on wages in the change from the present workweek to a shortened one: either all workers would receive pay cuts proportionate to the reduction of hours or they would continue to receive their pre-reduction income. In the latter case, diminished per capita output would soon result in higher prices and an effective reduction in purchasing power. In the former case, the reduction in purchasing power would of course be immediate.

This short-term loss to consumers would, however, bring certain long-term benefits. The danger of overproduction

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would recede, stabilizing the job market and the economy generally and conserving resources. Industry would be encouraged to turn its diminished capacity to the production of goods more likely to appeal to poorer and therefore warier consumers than much of what is offered now. New car models would appear less frequently than they do now, but one could expect the cars to be better made. The habit of thrift, although greatly enfeebled, has not entirely disappeared, and in a context of reduced purchasing power it would become socially acceptable to live frugally.

### Minimum Base Income

One of the most effective ways of beginning the transition to a no-growth economy would be the provision of a guaranteed basic income to every individual. Governments have toyed with various schemes of this sort as alternatives to the welfare system, but I have in mind something more comprehensive: society, through government, would give every person enough money to meet the basic requirements for food, shelter, clothing and medical care. And there society's obligation would end.

Everyone, without exception, would receive this allowance, and it would not be taxable. Moreover, any money individuals earned would be their own affair and would not affect their basic allowance. The economic security of every individual would be assured and people would be free to work as much or as little as they liked. Many would probably work hard for a while and then take time off for travel, further education, child-rearing and what-have-you. Others would be content to trade a higher standard of living for uninterrupted leisure. Those with interesting, vital and satisfying jobs would most likely keep them; those who covet such jobs would feel free to abandon less interesting work in order to obtain the training or education necessary to qualify for them.

I doubt that such an arrangement would lead to mass defections from the work force. The allowance would indeed be basic, so there would still be a strong incentive to work—the more so if the workweek was only twenty hours, for the minimum-base-income scheme would actually complement the reduced-work-time program rather than serve as an alternative to it. In any case, the number of people living solely on the basic allowance would probably not be vastly greater than the present number of people who are unemployed. But the nature of unemployment, and therefore our view of it, would change. Unemployment would cease to be a mark of social opprobrium and become a liberating alternative, and fear of unemployment would disappear. So too would much of the arbitrary power of employers, for the labor market would no longer be a buyer's market.

With the dismantling of the whole welfare and unemployment-compensation apparatus, the monster of government would shrink to close to manageable size. In fact, so vast and labyrinthine is the welfare establishment in the United States that a basic income scheme would probably not be unconscionably more expensive than the arrangements it would replace, even though the total population—and not just the jobless and the newly redundant civil servants—would receive benefits.

In the long run, both the basic income scheme and the twenty-hour workweek scheme would serve to decentralize the economy and erode the monolithic power of our dominant economic institutions. A work force that was assured of the means of subsistence, that had ceased to regard unemployment as a matter of either fear or shame, and that had learned to live with reduced expectations would be far less willing to jump through the corporate hoop than it is today. Add to this that either scheme would give people time to carry on significant economic activities outside the formal marketplace and the omnipotence of the corporations begins to look less awesome.

The past few years have seen the emergence of a modest "shadow" economy of production for personal consumption, of neighborhood cooperation, of barter and backyard entrepreneurialism, and the success of these ventures suggests that they can be a fruitful source of technical innovation and alternative energy. The growth of such practices, encouraged by a basic income scheme, might imbue the economy as a whole with some of the suppleness, imagination and vitality that most large corporations have long since ceased to exhibit—but which they might quickly learn to exhibit if faced with significant consumer defection to other sources of goods and services. The result could be a widely decentralized and highly variegated economy based on a mixture of advanced technology and labor-intensive production, both arising from the expressed needs of independent-minded consumers.

### Restrictive Trade Zones

Of course, neither a reduced workweek nor a basic income scheme could in itself effect the measure of economic change that is required. In fact, no purely domestic arrangements, however innovative, would be sufficient to compromise the power of the institutions that are the vehicles of growth, for the simple reason that this power transcends national boundaries and national constraints. In the face of programs as inimical to corporate interests as those I have just described, the reflex response of any industry not absolutely tied to a given place would be to take the money and run. The advanced industrial nations are already suffering from a steady draining away of capital, corporate expertise and industrial capacity to countries less exacting about minimum wages, working conditions, environmental pollution and the rights of workers to organize. In response, some governments, including our own, have begun to moderate their enforcement of legislation in these spheres in an effort to keep industry happy and at home. The key, however, is not to give in to the power of the great international corporations and financial institutions but to curtail it, and the surest way to do this is to repudiate the doctrine upon which it is based—free trade.

In place of the present structure of trade, I suggest the establishment of a number of distinct and more or less self-contained trade zones. Each zone would contain several nations roughly equivalent in their standards of living and per

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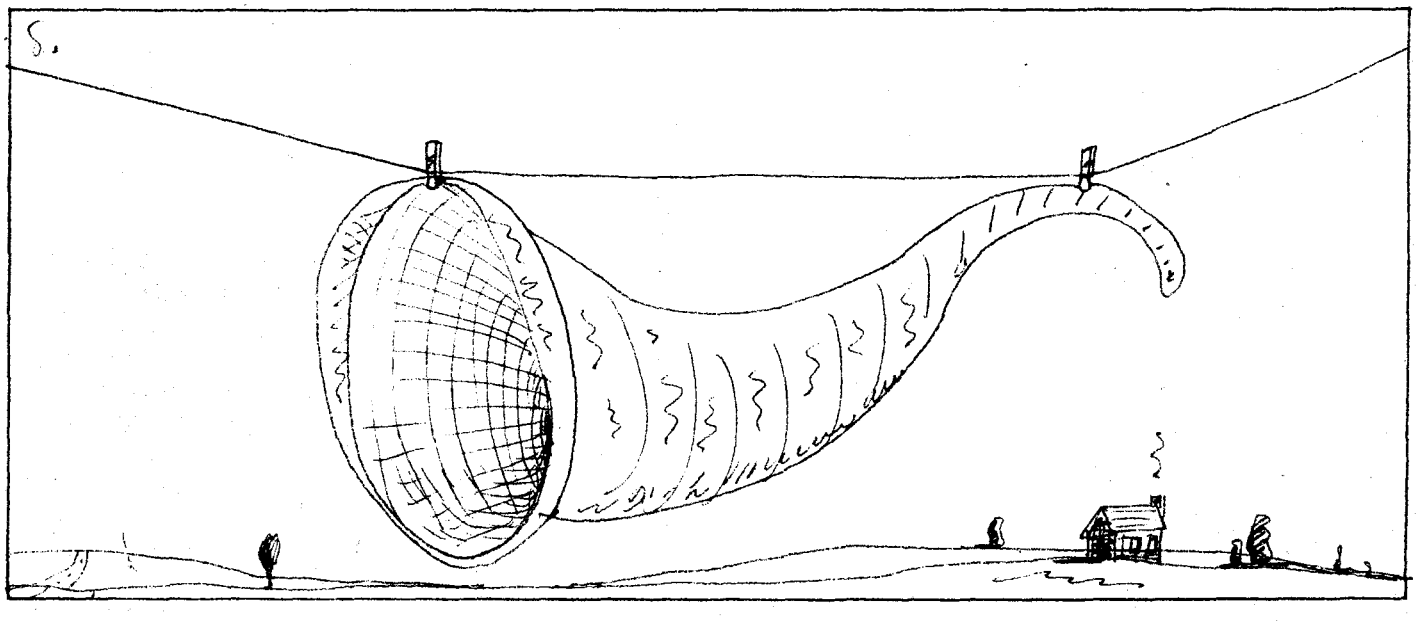
capita social expenditures. There would be minimum restraints on trade within a given zone, but goods brought into the zone would be subject to substantial—and, if necessary, prohibitive—tariffs.

The advantages of such an economic Balkanization of the world are clear enough if one compares its probable results with what obtains under existing trade arrangements. Free trade has generally meant a steady flow of wealth from the less-developed to the more-developed sectors of the world economy. In recent years, however, the pattern has not been quite so clear-cut. The reason is that the manufacturing function traditionally controlled by the advanced nations has been increasingly usurped by the less-developed ones, which offer industry the inestimable consolations of cheap labor, low taxes and lax regulation. While such flights of capital and manufacturing capacity damage the economies of the advanced nations, they bring little benefit to the Third World. The profits are shipped elsewhere, and the pittance in wages that stays behind is small compensation for the explosive growth of cities, the uncontrolled pollution, the looting of resources and the destruction of indigenous patterns of production and consumption. Who, then, *does* benefit? In the less-developed nations, a minuscule elite of politicians, managers, professionals and entrepreneurs; in the advanced nations, a larger elite that includes the executives and stockholders of the banks, brokerage houses, industries and consortiums that carry on this elaborate game of the middle against both ends.

How can the game be broken up? Laws and international agreements limiting the movement of capital would have little effect on it. Capital is an abstraction in the bowels of a computer; it can be lifted nimbly from one country and dropped into another as rapidly as modern telecommunications can carry it, and no regulatory apparatus could possibly keep pace with its movements. But goods are palpable and visible, their movement cumbersome and slow: a system of trade zones girded by customs barriers would deflect trade into channels appropriate to the interests of the nations involved, and where trade went, capital would presently follow. Confined to smaller and more closely regulated spheres of operation, multinational corporations would find their opportunities for mischief sharply reduced—indeed, the companies themselves would suffer reductions in scale and power.

Because the members of a given trade zone would be of the same order of technical and economic sophistication, industry would not have the option of decamping to the Third World with a view to selling cheap goods to the country it had abandoned. It would have to stay home and make the best of it. With industry no longer able to threaten to leave at the drop of an environmental-control law, legislation restraining pollution, the abuse of natural resources and other dubious corporate behavior would be more likely to be enacted. The feasibility of measures such as a reduced workweek or a basic income scheme would be greatly enhanced: both would raise production costs, but in the absence of any obligation to export or to compete with imports, there is no reason to think this consideration would be crucial.

Moreover, industry would gain as well as lose by the new arrangements. It would enjoy the advantages of protection from rivals in countries with cheaper labor or less stringent regulation. Forced into smaller frames of reference, corporations suffering from the stagnation of industrial gigantism might discover that contraction and consolidation often result in greater efficiencies. Current laws against monopolistic and collusive practices have little bite because corporations can simply export these practices to less puritanical climes, or else carry them on in the cozy no man's land they have made for themselves by playing off the laws of one nation against those of another. Confinement within one trade zone would force industry to accept the intent of antitrust legislation and oblige it to engage in real competition. And real competition is an exercise regimen that many of our more grossly overweight corporations desperately require: the corporate practice of ganging up to attack soft spots in the market may mean short-term gains for the parties to the conspiracy, but it cannot exempt



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them in the long run from the need to operate efficiently and imaginatively.

The transition to a world of trade zones of this kind is not hard to imagine. Let us say that the United States suddenly erects steep customs barriers against the manufactures of such up-and-coming nations as Taiwan, Korea and Singapore. These nations retaliate, singly or in combination, by closing their shores to American goods. But because the balance of trade was in their favor in the first place, this does little harm to the United States. An attempt to dump their swelling inventories in Western Europe stimulates another erection of tariff barriers, so the Asian trio has little choice but to unload the goods in Third World countries. This menaces the fragile industries of these countries, which retaliate by rejecting further imports.

The result is a number of potential or embryonic trade zones, the products of improvisation and revenge rather than of cooperation and design. Now comes the moment of opportunity and danger. The nations have three alternatives. They can back down and return to the *status quo ante bellum* (a despairing choice for countries with nothing to return to but trade deficits). They can fight it out, a procedure certain to destroy some of the combatants and cripple the rest. Or their contentiousness can end in something like amity—in a recognition that they have no real choice but to make the best of the new arrangements.

The eventual transformation from a world of trade wars into one of trade zones would inevitably be a slow, awkward and uneven process, with some nations readily making the necessary accommodations while others continued to look toward the day when their rivals lay shattered and they might once again embark upon a course of growth. Whether such a change occurred would depend on the reasonably widespread acceptance of the perception that abandoning growth was the wisest choice—in terms of keeping the fabric of the world together, perhaps the only choice. And the extent to which this perception would prevail *then* depends on the measure of our willingness to accept it *now*.

That willingness, in turn, depends to a great extent on our ability to resist the remorseless optimism of the corporations, with its confident depiction of the future as a kind of cornucopia designed and operated by the *Fortune* 500. This view—that what is good for General Motors is good for America—is a line of snake oil that many of us have bought without inspection for years. Consequently, business and industry have every reason to expect that we will loyally continue to support their lumbering attacks on any and all efforts to meddle with the prevailing order of things. And this is the real source of their strength: it derives ultimately not from their money, their worldwide holdings or even their enormous political influence but from our complicity. If we withdraw our complicity, if we reject the illusory vision of an ever-growing, ever-more-bountiful future that the corporations set out for our delectation—a vision as appetizing and as suspect as any glossy advertisement in the magazines—then the dangerous power of these institutions will end. It is as simple and as difficult as that, and it is entirely up to us. □

NEW TENSIONS, OLD DIVISIONS

# How to Organize Immigrant Labor

STEVE EARLY

The influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees and undocumented workers into the American work force over the last few years has created a problem of unprecedented proportions for many labor unions. While it may be that sweeping actions like the Immigration and Naturalization Service's nationwide raids last month get all the publicity, it is from the quiet, steady process of understanding and organizing—especially by immigrant unionists who know the difficulties close up—that the solutions will have to come.

This is the reality of immigrant labor in America:

• In a nonunion garment factory in Los Angeles, the pay is low and the working conditions are poor. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union has been contacted by the American workers in the shop and is eager to help them organize. Other employees—Mexicans, Chinese, Filipinos—have entered the United States illegally, however, and are afraid to get involved. They know that in the past, companies that employed undocumented workers have responded to organizing drives by calling in the I.N.S. to deport union activists. More than once, I.N.S. agents have raided a shop on the day of a National Labor Relations Board election.

• In a telephone-equipment manufacturing plant in Nashville, supporters of the Communications Workers of America have just won an election after five unsuccessful attempts. But the margin was close—only fourteen votes. In order to negotiate a good first contract, the union needs to maintain its majority support. Suddenly, there is a new obstacle in its path. The company has hired seventy-five Laotian refugees who were relocated in Nashville with the aid of local church groups. The Laotians are grateful to have jobs and know nothing about unions. None will sign union cards or come to union meetings. Convinced that the Laotians are part of a company plot to bust the union, black and white workers react to them with anger and resentment.

• Before layoffs started at a unionized General Electric plant in San Jose, California, about 150 of the 800 or so workers were Vietnamese. When workers were laid off, the Vietnamese were the first to go, and many felt they were being treated unfairly. Since most of them speak little English, the plant's union agent can't communicate with them and they can't understand the explanation of the layoff procedures in the union contract. Some Vietnamese were told that the union "works for the Communists." As a result, only two of the 150 refugees joined it.

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Situations like these are becoming more and more common around the country as many workplaces wrestle with the complexities of a multinational work force. As in the past, employers are actively exploiting the fears and insecurities of immigrant workers, often hiring them in groups so they can be pitted against one another to keep unions out or weaken union bargaining. "Companies in the United States are very reluctant to let the immigrant workers be unionized," says Vietnamese refugee Ngoc The Phan, a former Saigon labor lawyer now assisting unions in California. "They take advantage of our peoples' ignorance of their rights, the language barriers that exist and the rivalries between different nationalities. They try to turn one minority against another—Chinese against Vietnamese, Vietnamese against the Laotians, Mexicans against the Southeast Asians, and the American workers against all of them."

In organizing campaigns and other activities, many unions are developing multilingual and community-oriented approaches to overcome these divisions. To recruit immigrant workers, they are hiring organizers and staff members from minority backgrounds, relying on community groups to help develop workplace support and utilizing the services of a new breed of "union-building" consultants like Ngoc The Phan, recent immigrants or refugees themselves.

"It doesn't take a Hispanic to organize Hispanics—but it helps," says Mexican-born Miguel Machuca, director of organizing for the I.L.G.W.U. in Los Angeles. "That's why most of our organizers in this area, like myself, are bilingual Latinos. Many of us have made the trip from very poor villages in Mexico to the garment shops and warehouses around Los Angeles. So we know what it's like and how to relate to the people. If we have Chinese, Koreans or Filipinos in a shop we're trying to organize, right away we find out what dialects they speak and get someone in there to translate leaflets and talk to them."

According to Machuca, the I.L.G.W.U. has attempted to win the confidence of southern California's many undocumented workers by vigorously defending their right to unionize without interference or harassment by the I.N.S. The union has filed suit against the government to stop deportation moves that disrupt or destroy union-organizing campaigns. Its willingness to organize and represent the undocumented has been widely publicized in Spanish-speaking communities.

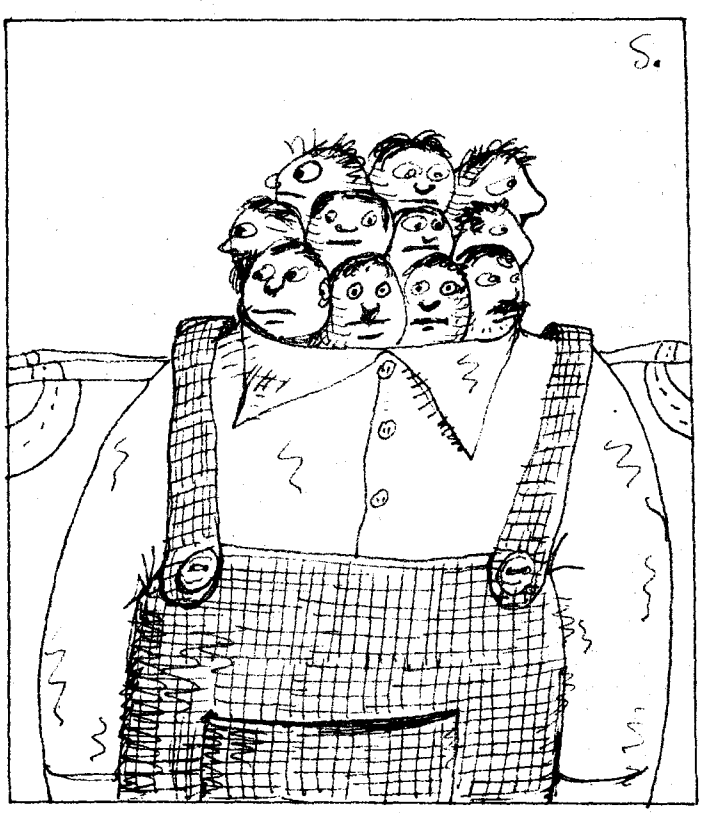
In northern California's Santa Clara County, where thousands of Southeast Asians work in the booming electronics industry, the A.F.L.-C.I.O. central labor council and staff members of the labor studies program at San Jose City College have helped a group of Vietnamese form an organization called the League for Southeast Asian Labor Advocacy. Headed by Ngoc The Phan, the league offers employment counseling, educates workers about labor law and unions, helps them fight unfair practices by their employers and provides translation services that enable immigrants to participate in union affairs.

"Unions are at a distinct disadvantage in dealing with Southeast Asians if they don't have people like this who know the cultural patterns and can overcome the language barrier," says labor educator Jim Potterton. "Often management will hire a whole group and then deal with them through one person who speaks a little English and acts as a kind of lead person. It's easy for the company to have a considerable hold on people that way."

In organizing drives elsewhere in the country, unions in need of translators and interpreters have turned to other South Vietnamese and Laotians who had been trade unionists, government officials or military officers in Asia. The Nguyen, once an adviser to the Saigon government on labor affairs, has worked for the Machinists, Automobile Workers, Rubber Workers, and Food and Commercial Workers in Oklahoma and Nebraska. Nguyen Dinh, a former South Vietnamese Air Force colonel, has used his radio show in San Diego to make pro-union broadcasts in Vietnamese, Lao and Khmer. For expenses and a small fee, both will travel to the scene of an organizing drive, translate literature, speak at meetings and visit workers in their homes to talk to them about the union.

In one southern California campaign conducted by the Communications Workers, Nguyen Dinh discovered that the National Labor Relations Board had incorrectly translated an important election notice. He later testified about this for the union at an N.L.R.B. hearing. On a trip to Salt Lake City, he visited the home of every Vietnamese worker involved in a C.W.A. drive there and secured the vote of each one.

"We get good results," says The Nguyen, whose travels have contributed to several union election victories. "The Vietnamese people in this country don't have any leaders here yet, so they look to see who was a big personality in Vietnam and follow them. When I go into a refugee com-



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munity, I find out who was a senator or general in the army or air force and work through them.

"At first the workers fear what will happen if they get involved with the union because the companies threaten to fire them or not hire any more of their friends and relatives," he explains. "But gradually I get them calmed down and interested in the union by telling them what it is and how it works. I convince them that over here it's different—the employers are not our absolute bosses. They too have to obey the law and respect the rights of their employees."

Seventy years ago, in labor struggles like the great Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike led by the Industrial Workers of the World, union organizers had an even more difficult task than The Nguyen, Nguyen Dinh and Ngoc The Phan. There they had to unite thousands of millworkers who came from two dozen nations and ethnic groups. Leaflets and speeches at meetings were translated into French, German, Italian, Greek, Swedish, Armenian and forty other languages. To maintain solidarity, strike leaders worked tirelessly with ethnic neighborhood groups and foreign language associations.

The Lawrence strike succeeded, but the tactics used there have long been thought to be a thing of the past. Labor's experience with the latest wave of immigration indicates the necessity of dusting them off and trying them again. □

A $1-BILLION-A-DAY MANEUVER

# The Float: How Banks Make Money With Your Money

WENDY COOPER

One Monday morning not long ago, a friend of mine deposited a check for a substantial amount of money, drawn on a stock account, in a checking account at the Bowery Savings Bank. The funds were owed to a man who was eager for his money, and my friend went home that night relieved to know that she could finally write him a check.

Her relief, however, turned out to be premature. She has two accounts at the Bowery, one her own and the other held jointly with her husband. That evening, she realized she had mistakenly deposited the check in the joint account.

Too bad, she thought, but she knew she could set things straight in the morning. She went back to the bank first thing, reported her error and asked them to transfer the funds directly to her personal account. Sorry, came the response, but it will take four days to effect the transfer: "That's the only way the machine can do it." She passed the excuse on to the increasingly impatient creditor.

But that was not the end of the matter. She subsequently discovered that in withdrawing the funds from the joint account, the Bowery had not only debited that account but had somehow managed to bounce several checks in the process. And she learned that her stock account check had cleared the New York City commercial bank on which it was drawn on Tuesday, the very day she was told "the machine" would take four days.

My friend also discovered that some of her difficulties had to do with the fact that she was using a savings bank, required by law to have a "correspondent" commercial bank, thus adding another step to the check-clearance process. The Bowery eventually apologized to her for having bounced her checks, but in fact long delays for savings institutions have been held to be legal. In a suit a few years ago against the Dime Savings Bank, the New York State Court of Appeals ruled that it was reasonable for a thrift institution to mandate a six-day delay on local checks and a fifteen-day delay on those from banks outside the metropolitan area.

Indeed, as it turns out, my friend was lucky. Had her check been drawn on an out-of-state bank, she might have had to wait weeks. A lawsuit against a Chicago bank a few years ago revealed that the bank did not give its depositors credit for checks drawn on New York City banks until *fourteen* days after the deposit had been made, even though the money was collected within two days. And a report prepared for the Bank of America in 1980 found that "in some cases funds are held up to 20 business days."

Check-clearance delays may be the biggest single source of annoyance for bank depositors. But behind this matter of inconvenience there is a far more important, far less obvious, story.

There is a total of about $1 trillion in consumer deposits at any one time in the nation's banks, and the banking system naturally wants to make use of that money for as long as it can. Thus the practice of what it euphemistically calls "delayed funds availability"—or, in financial circles, the "float": the period of time when money is theoretically in transit from one bank to another, during which time banks actually make money on your money while it's inaccessible to you.

What happens in fact is that banks receive provisional credit for deposited checks, including out-of-state checks, within three days at the most, either from the Federal Reserve Board or from one another. But before they have to put that money in a depositor's account they can invest the funds represented or loan them to another financial institution or make them available at various (currently astronomical) money market interest rates.

In short, in the words of Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd, who sits on the Banking Committee, this three-day delay gives the banks "a long time during which they can earn money on the float, while too often their customers sink."

The interest income to the banks on a single check of, say, $100 is minuscule—a matter of cents. However, studies con-

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ducted by Dodd's staff indicate that the average annual value to the banks of just a one-day float approaches $1 billion. The figure is only a rough estimate, derived from information on banks in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Washington, D.C., but Dodd's staffers arrived at it after some careful calculations. They took the average daily amount advanced by the Federal Reserve to the banks in 1981, a total of $2.788 billion, to represent 40 percent of the credit behind the float (since the Fed processes about 40 percent of the checks), and came up with a total of just under $7 billion. Then, figuring the amount of daily interest pegged to the average rate for three-month Treasury bills (14.03 percent in 1981), they calculated the value of a single day's float to be $977.5 million.

That figure is even more interesting when compared with the figure for bank losses due to uncollectable checks. The justification for the float, after all, is that it protects banks from losses resulting from criminal fraud and from checks drawn on insufficient funds. But according to a 1973 study by the Bank Administration Institute, a research group, only .67 percent of all checks processed were uncollectable and the total loss to banks was a mere $5 million, or $20 for every 100,000 checks processed.

Apart from Dodd's investigation and sporadic information such as the bank institute study, there is scandalously little available about the float and its inequities. But what we do know about the float does seem to reveal more about confusion and inefficiency in the banking industry than any conspiratorial or calculated ruthlessness.

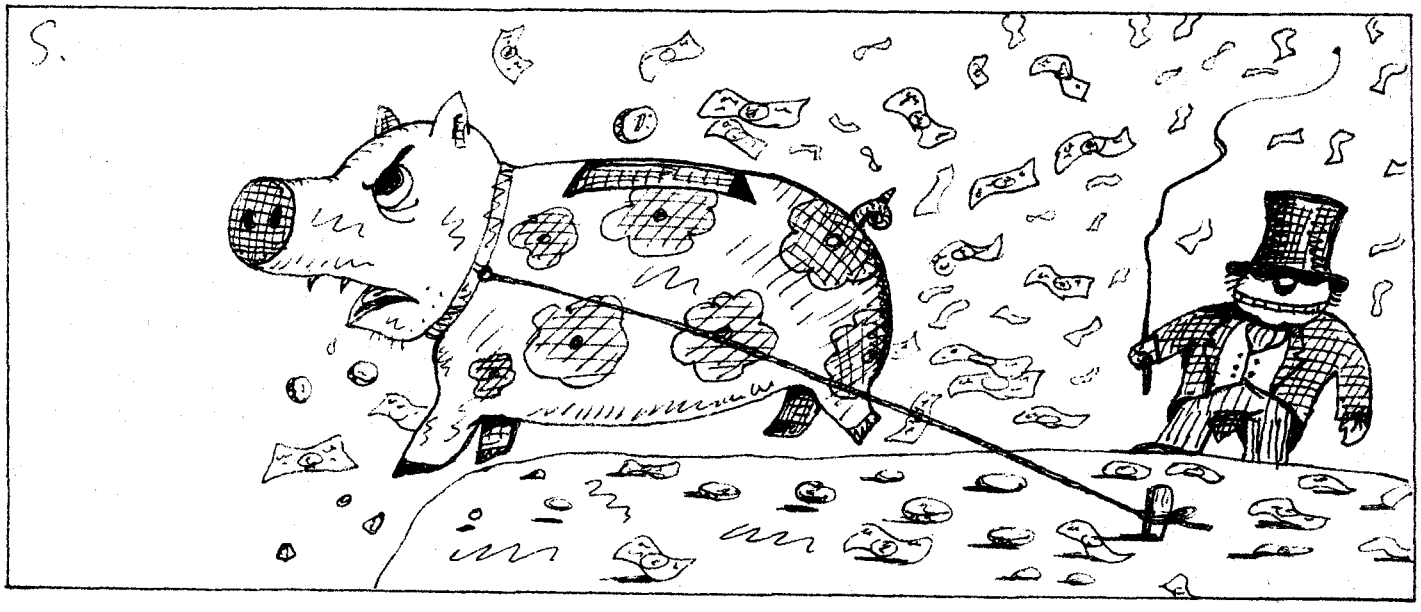
After nearly four years of research, a Federal Reserve task force has failed to produce current and comprehensive data on such fundamental float variables as the number of checks processed and the actual check-processing times. While acknowledging the existence of abuses and admitting that long "hold times" are unnecessary, the Fed team has merely concluded that banks with more "equitable" policies should tell their less conscientious colleagues about them in the hope that some self-regulation may occur. The chances of that happening, already remote, are rendered even dimmer by the industry's own findings: most bank employees simply don't know how the check-clearance system works.

For the record, then, here's how it's done. Suppose a regular consumer check, drawn on one New York City bank (A), is deposited at the Manhattan branch of another New York City commercial bank (B) on a Monday morning. Later that day it will be moved by truck, with thousands of other checks, to Bank B's check-processing center, perhaps on Long Island.

About 6 P.M., a computer-controlled machine will begin the sorting process. Theoretically capable of handling 120,000 items an hour, the machine can actually handle only about half that number. But, barring disaster, the check will be dispatched to Bank A by 10 A.M. the following business day, Tuesday. Since both banks are in New York City, the transfer will take place at the Clearing House, a few blocks north of the Battery on Broad Street, where the city's twelve member commercial banks have been settling their daily accounts with one another for over 100 years.

Having collected the check, Bank A should begin its sorting process on Tuesday evening and determine whether there are sufficient funds in the check's account. According to the Uniform Commercial Code, which governs check processing, and the Fed's "Regulation J," which deals with checks clearing the Federal Reserve system, banks can return unpaid checks up to midnight of the day after the day they were received from a collecting bank.

Not all banks impose a waiting period on funds deposited by check, but when examiners from three Federal agencies scrutinized the practices of about 1,000 commercial banks a couple of years ago, they found that nearly two banks in five do so. Moreover, of the banks surveyed, 11 percent put a hold of at least four days on funds for a personal check drawn on a bank in the same city. The delay is even longer—sometimes up to twenty business days—for checks drawn on out-of-state banks. These checks, which must go through one of the Fed's Regional Check Processing Centers, are frequently subject to lengthy transportation delays. (Of-



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ficials at the New York Fed, for example, relate horror stories about Montana blizzards holding up planeloads of checks for days.)

A recent article in *Consumer Reports* suggested that the holding policies of most banks reflect more paranoia than prudence. A bank will often withhold funds from a customer to whom it has already extended overdraft checking privileges. Some banks impose a blanket hold on all out-of-town checks, regardless of the customer's credit standing.

But the key point is that each bank in the check-clearance chain grants the preceding bank "provisional credit"—subject to revocation, of course, if the check is returned. The banks, then, have the use of your money, without consulting you, some time before you do. Typically, they put it to work overnight by lending funds to other banks and financial institutions.

The banks are quick to point out that consumers can generate floats for themselves. If, for example, you have a bank account in Idaho and write a check to someone in New York, you can expect that it will take several days for your payment to be debited against your account and could use that money in the meantime. But since the interest is proportionate to the size of the checks being cleared, the benefits to a single customer are small.

There was a time when "remote disbursement"—the practice of writing checks on banks in far-flung corners of the country in order to generate a few days' float—was a favorite technique of many corporations. But the Fed a few years ago voiced its official disapproval. Since it guarantees the availability of funds between any two points in the continental United States for up to three days, it found itself carrying the extra float for any additional time taken to clear the checks. Float "on the Fed" was averaging $3.4 billion a day. The 1980 Monetary Control Act directed the Fed to reduce the volume of float it carried, and last August, for the first time, the agency began to charge banks to clear checks—from a penny to a nickel, depending on the distance between banks.

These days, "it's difficult to find anyone who will admit to having remote disbursed," *Institutional Investor* remarked in a recent issue. Nevertheless, "times being what they are," the magazine continued, "a few unscrupulous companies are reportedly trying even more underhanded methods to delay the processing of the checks they write." Some were said to be punching pinholes in or demagnetizing the numbers on the faces of the checks in the hope that the depositor's computer would spit the checks out, giving the companies another day or two of float.

And there is, according to *Institutional Investor*, a new trend in corporate float manipulation: "controlled disbursement." Under this system, a company writes its checks on a bank that receives only one "cash letter" (or bundle of checks) a day from the Fed, and early in the morning if the bank is in the vicinity of a Fed processing center. Thus, bank personnel can inform corporate cash managers what checks have come through on their company's account that day in time to let them deposit just enough to cover that amount and invest the rest before late-morning money market deadlines.

Banks justify their use of the float and the income it generates by pointing to the rising costs of doing business. The cost of processing a check has risen to 14 cents from 9 cents four years ago, and the cost of maintaining a checking account now averages $4.90 a month, compared with $2.90 in 1977, a Chemical Bank official told *The New York Times* recently. Banks are also coming under heavy competitive pressure from such unlikely "bankers" as Sears and Merrill Lynch, which are offering the sort of services that were once the exclusive preserve of the commercial banks and which are permitted to offer them at much more attractive interest rates.

In response to this, some commercial banks (notably Bankers Trust) have virtually gotten out of consumer banking altogether. Others, like Citibank, are trying to discourage smaller accounts. According to Citibank's senior vice president for consumer banking, Richard Kovacevich, "A person with only $200 or $300 in savings shouldn't be in a bank"; the best alternative he could come up with was to put the money "back under the mattress." Still others, according to *The Times*, have decided to shift the costs from those who maintain large deposit balances to those with smaller accounts, who bankers contend have not been paying their full share.

More generally, however, the industry is looking to electronics as the cost-saving wave of the future. The consumer, already the beneficiary of twenty-four-hour automatic tellers and home banking by computer, is being promised untold marvels. Even the archaic system of manual check clearance is to be overhauled. Some 10,000 commercial banks already use what's known as an automated clearing house mechanism, and the Fed is promising a massive program to "upgrade electronic capabilities for the 1980s."

But there's at least one catch. Industry experts and consumer groups alike warn that with the advent of full-scale electronic banking, banks will be able to get checking, savings and credit accounts under one roof by hooking them into the electronic system. The consequences for individual privacy, let alone control, are clearly profound.

As long as deregulation remains the order of the day in Washington, the chances of fresh legislation on check clearance are remote. Even so, lawmakers are hoping for better things than a "Return to the Mattress" movement. Senator Dodd's banking staff is waiting for the industry's comments on an American National Standards Institute study about the possibility of establishing a uniform endorsement system to eliminate the intermediate steps involved when a check bounces.

They're also hoping to get more information about the float. Federal Reserve officers have promised to try to better estimate the float's value to the banks. But judging by their weary warning that such an effort will involve making some "heroic assumptions," legislators—and consumers—could be in for a long wait. □

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# U.S. Arsenal

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

scientists and a golden sunset silhouetting a soldier next to the latest in improved nuclear weaponry.

There is a great deal, however, that officials at the lab don't readily reveal. All of the weapons programs are highly classified. The exact amount of plutonium and other radioactive materials it stores is also a secret—although there may be between 600 and 800 pounds of plutonium there at any one time. Despite criticism from local congressmen and the Department of Energy, lab officials have played down or denied health, safety and environmental hazards posed by the work there. And though they boast of the lab's technical importance in researching and developing nuclear weapons, they don't publicize the critical role the lab plays in influencing U.S. defense policy.

The weapons labs are a powerful lobby. When the United States and the Soviet Union were negotiating a comprehensive ban on the testing of nuclear weapons in the late 1970s, the labs tried to stop it by conducting what *The Washington Post* called a "behind the scenes campaign" of "brass-knuckle bureaucratic warfare." The treaty was never concluded.

During the Carter Administration, Lawrence Livermore program director Roy Woodruff was quoted as saying, "There's been a gradual erosion [in the nuclear weapons program] and we're going to be very aggressive and out front at trying to turn that around." Los Alamos director Harold Agnew subsequently succeeded in getting the Administration to launch production of the neutron bomb.

Both Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos are managed for the D.O.E. by the University of California, an arrangement that has provoked vocal opposition from many U.C. students and faculty members. A demand for severing the relationship has been raised by the U.C. Nuclear Weapons Labs Conversion Project, which argues that academia's good name is used to give a "cloak of legitimacy" to the labs and the scientists working there.

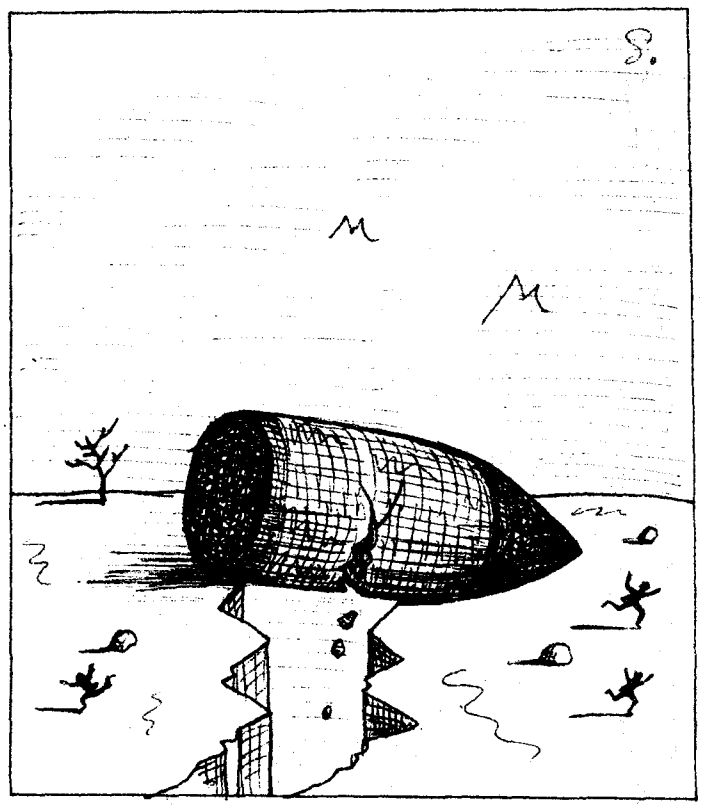
Similar arguments have been voiced by Gov. Jerry Brown, and the controversy has reached the U.C. Board of Regents. But in June 1981 the regents voted to renew the D.O.E. contract and keep the university in the nuclear weapons business for another five years. Brown's critics charge that the governor could have swung the vote the other way by filling three vacant seats on the Board of Regents with sympathetic appointees.

Lawrence Livermore was founded in 1952, largely at the urging of H-bomb designer Edward Teller, who felt that Los Alamos needed some competition to speed the dawning of the thermonuclear age. Since its founding, the lab has been responsible for the miniaturization of strategic warheads and the design of the Poseidon, Polaris and Minuteman ICBM warheads. It developed warheads for MIRVs (multiple independently-targeted re-entry vehicles) and MARVs (maneuverable re-entry vehicles) and pioneered the design of antiballistic missile systems that were rejected by Congress in 1972 as too expensive and too destabilizing (although similar systems are now being considered by the Reagan Administration).

More recently, the lab has been busy designing a whole new generation of bombs: warheads for the Lance and cruise missiles, strategic bombs for the B-52 and artillery-fired tactical weapons. These kinds of modifications to existing nuclear technology—what the bomb people call "weaponization"—are the lab's bread and butter. But Lawrence Livermore director Roger Batzel made it clear in his 1980 "state of the laboratory" address that the lab's preference runs to "advanced concepts" in weaponry—the sexy new ideas that attract the best and brightest scientists and engineers. These include the latest version of the neutron bomb and the new "reduced-residual-radioactivity" weapon, a tactical bomb that creates much less fallout but still packs a big blast.

Another bit of exotica under development at Lawrence Livermore is the "death ray" weapon, which uses particle beams or laser emissions to try to knock enemy missiles and satellites out of the sky. It comes in several varieties.

Charged particle beams—very high-density and high-energy rays of subatomic particles—are still in the early phases of research. A 1979 report by four M.I.T. professors argued



*Marcy Darnovsky is an editor of* It's About Time, *the newspaper of the Abalone Alliance. This article is excerpted from* Nuclear California: An Investigative Report, *published this month by Greenpeace/The Center for Investigative Reporting.*

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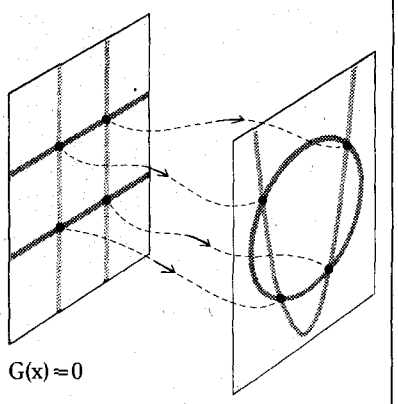
# The Continuation Method

*The need to solve systems of polynomial equations arises in pursuits ranging from geometric optics to chemical kinetics. A practical method of solution, developed at the General Motors Research Laboratories, provides designers of mechanical parts with a new capability.*

**Two equations in two unknowns**




*The two pairs of parallel lines of G(x) = 0 evolve into the parabola and ellipse of F(x) = 0.*

*The three pairs of parallel planes of G(x) = 0 evolve into the paraboloid, ellipsoid and cylinder of F(x) = 0.*

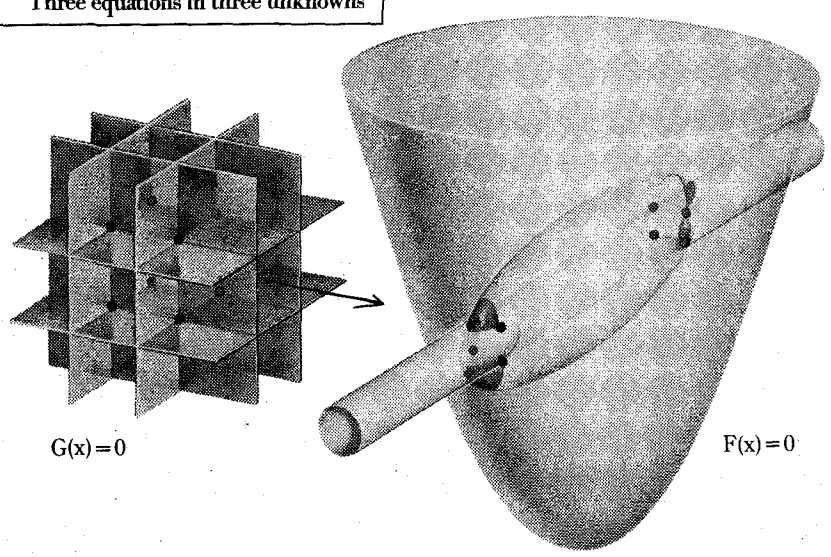
CLASSICALLY difficult non-linear equations—those made up of polynomial expressions—can now be solved with reliability and speed. Recent advances in the mathematics of continuation methods at the General Motors Research Laboratories have practical implications for a wide range of scientific and engineering problems. The immediate application at General Motors is in mechanical design. The new method finds all eight solutions to three quadric equations in a few tenths of a second—fast enough for computer-aided design on a moment-to-moment basis. Algorithms based on this method are critical to the functioning of GMSOLID, an interactive design system which models the geometric characteristics of automotive parts.

Systems of non-linear equations have been solved for many years by "hit or miss" *local* methods. The method developed at General Motors by Dr. Alexander Morgan is distinguished by being *global* and *exhaustive*. Local methods depend on an initial estimate of the solution. They proceed by iterative modifications of this estimate to converge to a solution. However, success is not guaranteed, because there are generally no practical guidelines for making an initial choice that will ensure convergence. Reliability is further compromised when multiple solutions are sought.

Global methods, by contrast, do not require an initial estimate of the solution. The continuation method, as developed by Dr. Morgan, is not only global, but also exhaustive in that, assuming exact arithmetic, it guarantees convergence to all solutions. The convergence proof rests on principles from the area of mathematics called differential topology.

Here is the way continuation works. Suppose we want to solve a system $F(x) = 0$. We begin by generating a simpler system $G(x) = 0$ which we can both solve and continuously evolve into $F(x) = 0$. It is important that we select a G properly, so the process will converge. Dr. Morgan has devised a method for selecting G which gives rapid convergence and reliable computational behavior. He first applied a theorem established by Garcia and

**Three equations in three unknowns**

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Zangwill to select G. However, the resulting algorithm could not achieve the speed and computational reliability necessary for several applications. Next, he utilized some ideas from algebraic geometry—"homogenous coordinates" and "complex projective space"—to prove a new theorem for selecting G. The result of Dr. Morgan's efforts is a practical numerical method based on solid mathematical principles with innate reliability.

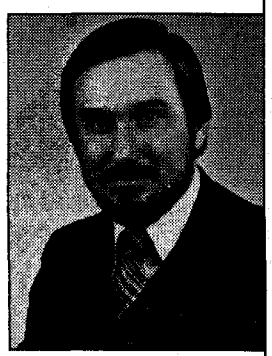
Reliability is the critical element for mathematical methods embedded in large computer programs, because errors may not become evident until after they have ruined a large data structure compiled at great expense and effort. Speed is also important to economical real-time implementation. This method has proved to be reliable and fast in solving problems involving equations up to the sixth degree in three or four variables. However, there are obvious practical limitations on the number of equations and their degree, due to the limited precision of computer arithmetic and computer resource availability.

THE FIGURES illustrate the transition from simple $G(x)=0$ to final $F(x)=0$. In both figures, the "simplicity" of $G(x)=0$ is reflected graphically in its linear structure—seen as lines and planes. The non-linearity of $F(x)=0$ is seen in the curvature of the final shapes in each figure.

In figure 1, the four dots on the left plane represent the set of simultaneous solutions to the system of equations $G(x)=0$. The four dots on the right plane represent the set of simultaneous solutions to the system of equations $F(x)=0$. The dashed lines represent simultaneous solutions to intermediate systems whose graphs would show the evolution from one configuration to the other. With the addition of a third dimension in figure 2, the number of dots representing simultaneous solutions doubles. Representation of the transitional points, as in figure 1, would require a fourth dimension.

"Continuation methods, although well known to mathematicians," says Dr. Morgan, "are not widely used in science and engineering. Acoustics, kinematics and non-linear circuit design are just a few fields that could benefit immediately. I expect to see much greater use of this mathematical tool in the future."

## THE MAN BEHIND THE WORK



Dr. Alexander Morgan is a Senior Research Scientist in the Mathematics Department at the General Motors Research Laboratories.

Dr. Morgan received his graduate degrees from Yale University in the field of differential topology. His Ph.D. thesis concerned the geometry of differential manifolds. Prior to joining General Motors in 1978, he taught mathematics at the University of Miami in Florida and worked as an analyst at the Department of Energy's Savannah River Plant in South Carolina.

While serving in the U.S. Army, Dr. Morgan participated in the development and analysis of simulation models at the Strategy and Tactics Analysis Group in Bethesda, Maryland.

Dr. Morgan's current research interests include the qualitative theory of ordinary differential equations and the numerical solution of non-linear equations.

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that a particle beam system would be "extraordinarily difficult if not altogether impossible" to develop and that countermeasures would be "easy and inexpensive to deploy." But other, more eager experts have managed to secure $50 million for the construction of a controversial Advanced Test Accelerator at Lawrence Livermore's Site 300 that the Defense Department hopes will determine the weapon's feasibility by the late 1980s.

If particle beams are a flop, laser beams may turn out to be the military's best bet. Early in 1981 Livermore successfully tested a laser powered by energy from a small nuclear explosion at the Nevada Test Site. The device is designed to be launched into orbit on laser battle stations that could, in the words of the Defense Department, "alter the world balance of power."

Lawrence Livermore has benefited from the energy crisis as well as from the arms race. The lab gets considerable public-relations mileage out of its energy research, but in reality most of this work has weapons applications. In fact, the lab is required to limit its nonweapons activities to projects that are "complementary" to its weapons work, and Batzel has stated that the new energy and environmental programs "are compatible with and have enhanced our work in weapons research."

Laser fusion, for example, is being touted in many quarters as the energy source of the future. It can also be used, however, to simulate the effects of nuclear weapons explosions. This may be particularly useful in the event, however unlikely, of a comprehensive test ban treaty. The lab's laser fusion work has so far been funded as a defense program costing $58 million. Another $195 million is being spent on construction of the giant Nova laser facility, the largest in the United States.

Lawrence Livermore is the national research center for another kind of fusion, magnetic mirror fusion. In addition to a yearly $50 million operating budget (1981), the lab is constructing a $226 million Mirror Fusion Test Facility. The machine will use powerful magnetic fields to confine a super-hot hydrogen gas, called plasma, similar to the fuel that could one day power fusion reactors. Other nuclear energy work, like the testing of spent reactor fuel storage at the Nevada Test Site, is also part of the lab's repertory. A relatively minuscule portion of its budget goes for fossil fuel, solar and wind research.

On the morning of January 24, 1980, an earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale rattled the Livermore Valley, causing about $2.5 million damage to the lab and forcing the evacuation of many of its 7,000 employees. The quake damaged the Shiva laser facility and a small research reactor, which has remained shut ever since. All day, lab officials resolutely denied that there had been any radiation releases, but that evening reporters discovered that a 30,000-gallon tank containing a mixture of water and low-level radioactive tritium had been leaking at the rate of a quart per minute. Public information officer Jeff Garberson had been given a note about the leak in the early afternoon, but, he said, it "must have just slipped my mind."

This was one of the latest in a series of eighteen accidents since 1960 which the lab admits presented potential "off-site significance." Many of these were not reported to the public at the time. The list includes two large releases of gaseous tritium (radioactive hydrogen) and smaller emissions of radioactive cobalt, zinc, iodine, strontium and plutonium into the Livermore sewer system. Twice in 1980—within nine days—the lab accidentally leaked minute but potentially lethal amounts of plutonium, once into the atmosphere. The D.O.E. later accused the lab of disregarding safety regulations, of inadequate management and of allowing inexperienced workers to handle badly designed equipment.

The lab routinely emits tritium and argon-41 into the air. Critics from the U.C. Labs Conversion Project charge that in addition there are unreported releases of plutonium, curium, americium and other dangerously radioactive elements.

Whether routine or accidental, radiation escaping from the Livermore site is within easy contaminating distance of the drinking water of millions of Californians. The Hetch Hetchy Aqueduct, which supplies water to San Francisco, runs within three miles of the area. The South Bay water system passes within a few thousand feet of the lab in an open-air canal.

In 1973 the lab found plutonium in the topsoil of a field that borders the South Bay Aqueduct. The deadly material had apparently blown into the field from open-air evaporation pools full of liquids containing plutonium. Open-air evaporation was then, belatedly, discontinued.

The danger of a massive release of radiation from the lab was enough to have prompted five northern California congressmen to request in 1979 that the D.O.E. remove the plutonium. Governor Brown and various local officials added their pleas, but the department refused. Lawrence Livermore presents "no credible hazard" to people at the lab, wrote back the assistant secretary of energy for defense programs, "much less the populations of the Bay Area."

The 1980 earthquake at Livermore, however, did little to reassure northern Californians that they weren't living next to a potential Three Mile Island. The lab is, in fact, surrounded by four active earthquake faults. A building that houses tritium at the nearby Sandia Laboratory sits directly

## NUCLEAR CALENDAR

In the next issue, which coincides with the opening of the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, *The Nation* will present a comprehensive national and international calendar of antinuclear events for the next four months. The listings have been compiled by *Nuclear Reactions*, a new magazine devoted to coverage of disarmament actions that is scheduled to make its debut in September.

In that issue also will appear an "Open Letter to the American People" from the peace movement in West Germany, one of the most active in Europe.

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on the newly discovered active Las Positas Fault. If a severe quake and fire should rupture a building containing plutonium, says John Gofman, a former associate director of Lawrence Livermore, it could "cause an epidemic of tens or even hundreds of thousands of lung cancers in the Bay Area." A report released by Friends of the Earth warns that a radioactive disaster at the lab could force the evacuation of many of the 4.5 million people who live within a forty-mile radius of the facility.

A controversy has also erupted over the unusually high cancer rate among employees at Lawrence Livermore. After considerable foot-dragging, the California Department of Health Services released a study showing that, between 1972 and 1977, employees at the lab contracted melanoma, a form of skin cancer, five times more often than residents of surrounding communities. Thirty employees have died or are suffering from the rare disease, and at least one young child in the Livermore Valley has recently died from it, though elsewhere it is almost unheard of in children under 15.

Medical experts do not fully agree on the causes of melanoma. Some studies have established a link between the disease and the type of radiation emitted from materials used at the lab, but traditionally melanoma has been attributed to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Accordingly, public information director Garberson tried to blame the melanoma epidemic on the lab's "active recreation program." Director Batzel went along, issuing a memorandum that told lab employees, "If you are concerned about skin cancer, stay out of the sun."

Most, if not all, of the radiological hazards described here will be increased by the Reagan Administration's nuclear policies. The biggest nuclear weapons buildup in history will mean more nuclear warheads (17,000 new strategic warheads, according to the Center for Defense Information), more weapons tests (Lawrence Livermore wants to double the number of nuclear explosions at the Nevada Test Site) and new weapons systems designed and tested at the Livermore site. The lab will be handling, storing and transporting more radioactive materials than ever before. It will also, as a result, be exposing Bay Area residents to potentially unprecedented levels of radioactivity.

Yet the health hazards posed by the leaks and dribbles from Lawrence Livermore pale next to the Armageddons being stored up there. As recognition of this has spread, so has the campaign against the lab. It is a campaign with an analysis sophisticated enough to include the institutions behind the arms race—especially the ones that run the lab—and with tactics, though rigorously nonviolent, that are unquestionably confrontational. In the last six months the Livermore Action Group has undertaken a series of protests at the bomb factory's gates: leafletting in January, blockades in February and March, an April Fool's Day rally and a Mother's Day blockade at which sixty-six women and two men were arrested. These events will climax in what organizers predict will be a huge blockade and rally on June 21. □

## WRITERS CONGRESS RECORD

### The Writer and Society

*"Mao Zedong has pointed out that all art shows its class stand (i.e., whose side the writer is on), the attitudes of the artist (his celebrations and condemnations); it also shows what work and study the artist has been doing and at what audience the work is aimed.*

*"So that the artist, no matter his or her subjective pronouncements, objectively is relating to society in some specific way, and the artist's works have not only a social definition to them but a political one as well. It is no coincidence that the large publishing corporations prefer to publish and market books whose ideas are closest to their own. Or whose ideas can be co-opted and made marketable.*

*"It is no secret that African-American writers, for instance, have a great deal of trouble publishing their works; this is true for all the oppressed nationalities. This is because their works are generally more critical of U.S. society than publishers feel is useful. But it should also be noted that serious writers of any nationality have a similar difficulty publishing consistently and in most cases cannot make a living from what they do manage to get published. This is because, obviously, those corporations are principally interested in making a profit and maintaining the status quo, not seeking after truth and realization and social transformation. . . .*

*"We are, all of us, collectively responsible for society. But society is controlled, owned in fact, by a tiny ruling class. And it is only to their benefit if we feel we have no responsibility for society or within it. Our responsibility, finally, is to struggle collectively to wrest control of the world from repressive minorities, from imperialists, from racists, so that we may all go beyond the primitive, repressive world of minority rule and majority oppression. Our writing, objectively, either helps force the world into a more positive future or tries to hold it back to our Neanderthal past and present.*

*"Our work is a reflection in large part of our actual lives. . . . Our commitment in the real world—to be responsible for society and to help collectively move it forward, to help transform it, to make it less primitive, to help bring about the vision of* human life triumphant *that the most profound artists through the ages have always focused on—must be seen in our work, and we must learn to make that work both artistically powerful and politically revolutionary."*

—Amiri Baraka, poet,
American Writers Congress, October 9-12, 1981.

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# BOOKS & THE ARTS.

## All Shook Up

LOUIS MENAND

The publication last fall of Albert Goldman's biography of Elvis Presley was an important event, not so much because of Goldman's cruelties as because of the enormous response the book provoked. When serious writers in journals ranging from *The Village Voice* to the *Times Literary Supplement* rose to defend Presley's cultural significance, it was clear that *Elvis* had identified a substantial audience of intellectuals with an interest in popular entertainers. We are surely going to get more books for this audience—Goldman himself, when he gets his contracts straightened out, will be writing one on John Lennon—and it is tempting to speculate on the reasons for this fascination with the heroes of popular culture.

The interest can be attributed in great part to the change the image of the modern artist has undergone in the past fifteen or twenty years. Once the symbol of a heroic alternative to the voracious commercialism of modern life, the avant-garde artist has come since the 1960s to look like just another entrepreneur in the business of culture. An episode recounted in Andy Warhol's memoir of the 1960s, *Popism*, provides a neat illustration of what happened. One day in 1960, Warhol, at the time a successful commercial artist who made his living drawing shoes, decorating the windows of fashionable department stores and, on a few occasions, drawing little suns and rain clouds for TV weather maps, showed his friend and mentor Emile de Antonio two paintings he had made. Both were of Coca-Cola bottles: in one, the image was embellished with Abstract Expressionist drips and hash marks; in the other, the bottle was unadorned. De Antonio told Warhol that one of the paintings was worthless, but, he said, "The other is remarkable—it's our society, it's who we are, it's absolutely beautiful and naked, and you ought to destroy the first one and show the other."

It is of course the fondest sort of romanticism to read cultural history in the light of the esthetic decisions of individual artists; but it would not be indulging in more than the usual critical hyperbole to say that when Warhol threw out the canvas with the drips and hash marks, a major phase in the history of modern culture came to an end. Those painterly effects were the signature of the special sensibility that guaranteed Art. They were the traces of the painter's heroic struggle to transform the everyday into art, to make a statement about his special relation to the world of ordinary experience.

It is perhaps easier to accept the significance of Warhol's decision if we remember that it was not in the ordinary sense an artistic decision but primarily a commercial one (this aspect of Warhol's art is made quite clear in Calvin Tomkins's account of the episode of the two Coke bottles in *The Scene*). De Antonio may have thought he saw a work of art; Warhol realized he had something that would make him famous.

What Warhol had done was to turn one of the oldest of avant-garde strategies on the avant-garde itself, inverting the conventional relationship between high art and the marketplace and transforming the high culture art work into a commodity. Or to put it in esthetic terms—well, here is Warhol's own gee-whiz prose:

> Pop Art took the inside and put it outside, took the outside and put it inside. The Pop artists did images that anyone walking down Broadway would recognize in a second—comics, picnic tables, men's trousers, celebrities, shower curtains, refrigerators, Coke bottles—all the great modern things that the Abstract Expressionists had tried so hard not to notice at all.

"All the great modern things": the collapse of the distinction between high and popular culture that this phrase sums up has seemed to many people to be the defeat of culture. But it is really culture's triumph: it has always been the secret and mastering desire of modern culture to enter into our lives, to be experienced as more than simply a collection of esthetic artifacts, and now, by some extraordinary but inevitable adjustment of its self-image, it has done so.

The price paid by high culture in this adjustment was the loss of its heroic status. The consequences of Warhol's cynicism—a cynicism so profound it looked like innocence—for the content of modern art were really not as far-reaching as its consequences for the image of the modern artist. "I threw the bottle-rack and the urinal in their faces for a challenge," complained the unwilling godfather of Pop Art, Marcel Duchamp, "and now they admire them for their artistic beauty." The modern artist had always been the heroic challenger of official culture—of its commodity fetishism, its marketplace morality, its bourgeois notions of art. With the arrival of Popism and the emergence of the big money art world of the 1960s and 1970s, though, the avant-garde suddenly seemed to join forces with that part of modern life it had traditionally been understood to despise.

But the need for the culture hero that modern high culture had always filled—the artist whose life and work are the heroic testimony of the modern world's hostility to genius—did not disappear with the institutionalization of the avant-garde. The culture hero was simply rediscovered in another part of the cultural spectrum—in the world of popular culture. Since the spirit of modern art and literature had always been in direct conflict with the notion of art as a form of popular entertainment, this relocation of the culture hero from painting and poetry to rock music makes for one of the lovelier ironies generated by the collapse of the cultural hierarchy.

Looking back, we can see the kind of attraction someone like Elvis Presley would have for intellectuals in the modernist version of the myth of the artist as culture hero. Presley's career can be read as the embodiment of one of modern culture's two strategies for dealing with the phenomena of mass society and mass culture. The two strategies were resistance and submission, and both were understood to be heroic because both were understood to entail suffering. The notion that Presley submitted his talent to the inhuman machinery of commercial exploitation, and that he paid in consequence a terrible price, is the basis for his present peculiar stature as both the hero and the victim—the heroic victim—of modern mass culture.

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The history of twentieth-century culture might accurately be written as the history of the tensions between high and popular culture. The more familiar of high culture's two strategies for dealing with the majority culture was that of resistance; its argument was expressed succinctly in 1919 in Paul Valéry's essay "The Crisis of Mind," which laments "the diffusion of culture, and its acquisition by ever larger categories of individuals":

> Must such phenomena as democracy, the exploitation of the globe, and the general spread of technology, all of which presage a *deminutio capitis* for Europe . . . must these be taken as absolute decisions of fate? Or have we some freedom *against* this threatening conspiracy of things?
>
> Perhaps in seeking that freedom we may create it. But in order to seek it, we must for a time give up considering groups, and study the thinking individual in his struggle for a personal life against his life in society.

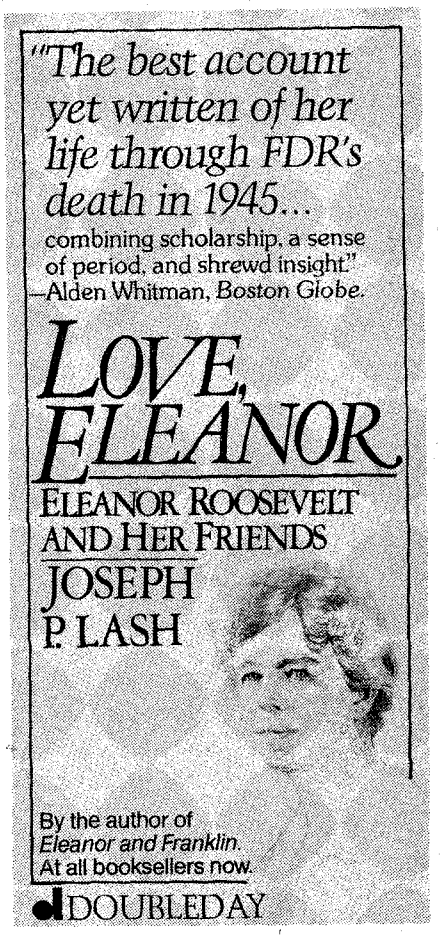
"A personal life *against* his life in society": this is the heroism of modernist formalism, of *Ulysses* and *Pale Fire*, *Four Quartets* and *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, Abstract Expressionism. The beauty of formal structure is a direct response to the disorder and anti-estheticism of modern life. The spiritual power and pathos of Mark Rothko's abstractions are more valued by us as the world in which they were painted is understood to militate against them: these paintings' power to move us is generated precisely by their resistance to the pressures of "all the great modern things" that they exclude.

But the modern artist might also submit himself to the experience of the modern world, and this response was just as heroic as the resistance advocated by Valéry. For many readers—Edmund Wilson was one—T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* was the record of such a submission. As Delmore Schwartz put it: "Modern life may be compared to a foreign country in which a foreign language is spoken. Eliot is the international hero because he made the journey to the foreign country." In John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.*, in Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, in Kurt Schwitters's "Merz" works, in Céline's novels, the artist transmits directly the sensations of the modern world, and the experience of modern life is presented without the mediation of elaborate formal structures.

"Get inside the whale," was George Orwell's advice to writers in his famous essay on Miller, "or rather, admit you are inside the whale (for you *are*, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending you can control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it." One way for the modern artist to represent the experience of life inside the whale without recourse to the alien language of high culture was to appropriate the forms of popular and commercial art: the prose of journalism, the structure of the detective novel, the typography of advertising, the "found object" from the detritus of the consumer society, the lyrics or the tune of a popular song. Though these things were intended to de-estheticize the work, their presence had the effect of endowing the familiar objects of popular culture with a kind of artistic resonance. The notion that readily attaches to this "higher" view of popular art is that the popular artist is the purest embodiment of the expense of spirit in the wasteland of modern mass culture; and this is the basis for our present-day inclination to elevate the status of popular artists and entertainers, and to see some of them as culture heroes.

Often it is the popular musician who seems best able to fulfill our requirements for the culture hero. This is in part because the corruption of talent is so much more fascinating to us than its cultivation. It strikes us, in the case of the popular musician especially, as an authentic expression of and response to the predatory commercialism that we like to think of as the peculiar bane of contemporary life. The origins of rock in the efforts of white working-class kids to sound like black singers have made it an especially attractive ground for the generation of culture heroes.

John Lennon is a perfect example: facing a future as a member of the industrial working class in Liverpool, he applied his special talents to the form of expression most readily available to him, both as a mode of protest *and* as a ladder out of the depths of his social position. This was, of course, a contradictory motivation, and one of the reasons Lennon is admired is because he tried to live out that contradiction even in the circumstances of his incredible commercial success—and because he appeared to know that the attempt was bound to be a failure, appeared willing at times to be the victim of his own success.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With Elvis Presley, willingness was not an issue. His talent was made to undergo every form of commercial exploitation his manager could invent and his public could consume. His genius was natural, powerful and extremely limited: he was a great interpreter of other people's songs. His eventual disappearance into the saddest depravities of contemporary life is precisely what has given his reputation among intellectuals its heroic cast. He traveled to that foreign land, and it killed him.

This idea of the artist-hero, and even and especially the entertainer-hero, is one of modern culture's myths. We know, I think, that it is a myth, but we still subscribe to it because it allows us to cling to the notion that art is pure and society is corrupt and corrupting. But this is a notion which, as contemporary culture continues to cash in on all the myths of modern high culture with ever-increasing speed and assurance, will come to seem more and more a delusion. □

# Shock Value

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

YEARS OF UPHEAVAL. *By Henry Kissinger. Little, Brown and Company. 1,283 pp. $100 (Deluxe). $24.95.*

When I had finished digesting *The White House Years*, I was so replete with its mendacity and conceit that I took a vow. I swore that I would never read another work by Henry Kissinger until the publication of his prison letters. But the old prayer "O Lord, Please Let Mine Enemy Write a Book" has proved too strong not to be answered once again.

How does one review a book like *Years of Upheaval* for a magazine like *The Nation*? After all, our readers have been battered by a revelation or two in their time. It would be insulting to "reveal" to them that Kissinger lies about his part in the Nixon bugging scandal, and otiose to inform them that he still cannot face the truth about the bombing of Cambodia and the subversion of Chile. I suppose one might resort, in the light of Seymour Hersh's excellent forensic material, to some discussion of Kissinger's complicity with Nixon's anti-Semitism. If I interviewed the King of Saudi Arabia, and he droned on about "Jewish traitors," and I replied, "Well, your majesty, there are Jews and Jews," would I get respectful reviews from people named Max Frankel and Stanley Hoffmann?

So let's get the obvious out of the way, and the power-worshiping reviewers along with it. This entire book is predicated on an enormous and conscious falsehood. Kissinger (or HAK, as he calls himself in photograph captions) would have us believe that he was constructing an intelligent and imaginative foreign policy, which was haltered and finally crippled by an extraneous force. It's as if HAK were plowing a harmless furrow and was hit by lightning out of a clear sky. Hersh's material shows that Kissinger was implicated not only in the actual violations that became known as Watergate but in the power plays overseas that made the illegal invigilations "necessary." Q.E.D. Kissinger lies. What does this prove except that we have credulous book critics?

So we need not waste time exploding HAK's apologia. It is, like the policy on which it was based, autodestructive. The volume repays study all the same. It contains, for instance, the following *aperçu:*

> Hanoi and Washington had inflicted grievous wounds on each other; theirs were physical, ours psychological and thus perhaps harder to heal.

And this:

> Our immediate task was to stop the war; to remove nuclear weapons from *Greece* while Turkey invaded Cyprus would eliminate all restraints on Turkish military action. I also feared that if we once withdrew nuclear weapons we might never be able to return them—setting a dangerous precedent.

And this:

> No nuclear weapon has ever been used in modern wartime conditions. . . .

What have we here? What we have is an appalling moral deafness. And a species of doublethink whereby the "wounds" of Washington and Hanoi can be equated, whereby the country that *ceases* to harbor nuclear weapons becomes "dangerous" and whereby the obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be simply forgotten. Many people on the left become embarrassed by talk of morality; they prefer to insist that it is policies and institutions, not individuals and personalities, that really "count." Now, it is probably true that the policies Kissinger followed and the leaders he served demanded a robotic and ruthless operative. But on the evidence of this horrible book, the specific character of HAK did make a life-and-death difference to thousands of people.

The thing is so badly written that the eye often slides over the atrocities (how on earth could Stanley Hoffmann praise the style?). Take this small but useful example. During the October 1973 war in the Middle East, the Portuguese government was reluctant to let its airfields be used for the resupply of Israel:

> I had therefore drafted a Presidential letter of unusual abruptness to Portuguese Prime Minister Marcelo Caetano that refused military equipment and threatened to leave Portugal to its fate in a hostile world. By the middle of Saturday afternoon, the Portuguese gave us unconditional transit rights at Lajes airbase.

There you have it—the relish in bullying and the implication, always present in the book, that you have to play hardball in this world if you want results. But there is no mention of the client status of the Portuguese dictatorship elsewhere, no mention of the colonial wars it was fighting with HAK's support and no mention *at all* of the Portuguese revolution that took place the following year. So that, when he comes to describe his tussle with Congress over intervention in Angola, HAK has abolished all the complexity of recent history by simple elision.

There is only one occasion when HAK admits the prime importance of local factors and allows that the internal life of a nation is more than the sum of its links to the United States. That is when he seeks to wriggle off the hook about Chile. He would prefer us to think of the coup as something spontaneously generated by endogenous conditions. (He also asks us to believe that Allende committed suicide.) As usual, he achieves his effect by a combination of omission—there's nothing on the famous "make the economy scream" meeting—and special pleading. He also stretches the definition of

*Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of* The Nation.

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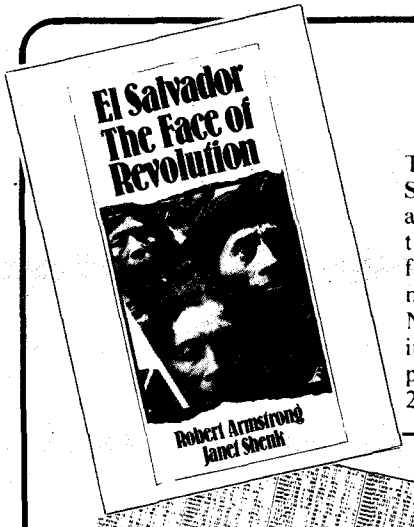


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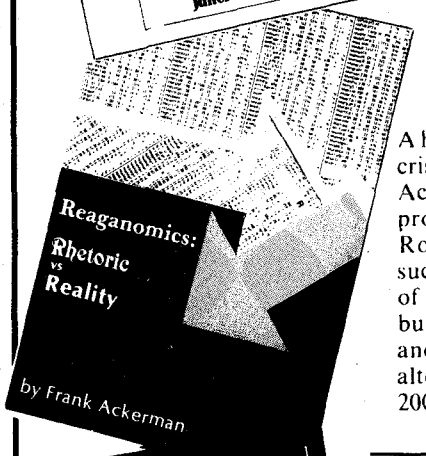


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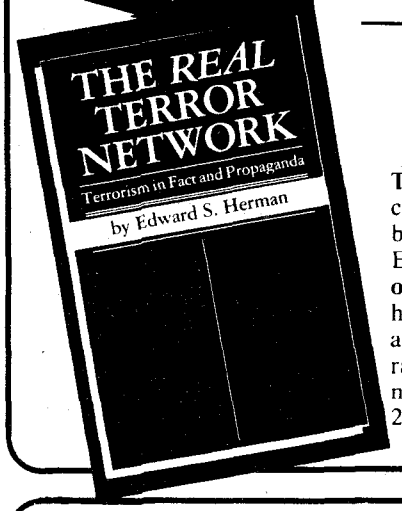


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euphemism by admitting that, after Pinochet took power, "rumors of torture were widespread." Just read the sentence twice—you will have done more than the editors of this book or most of its reviewers have done.

You can, of course, agree with *The New Republic*, whose reviewer was Walter Laqueur. As he puts it in his worldly way, "it's an all too well-established fact that prolonged government service . . . usually has a debilitating effect on a person's ability to write." Passing over the matter of Laqueur's own fluency, and forgetting the stylistic contributions of, say, Churchill, Talleyrand, Trotsky and de Gaulle, and bearing in mind that Laqueur makes this point in order to praise Kissinger's writing ability, I beg to differ. It is not politics and good writing that do not mix. It is the great mass of lies and crimes, moldering undigested at HAK's core, that makes his style so evasive and convoluted. Hardest to take are the moments of cracker-barrel philosophy that punctuate the narrative: "It is easy to go with the tide; more difficult to judge where the tide is going." Lots of that kind of thing.

Very occasionally, there is a moment of genuine revelation and interest. Usually, these occur when HAK is trying to justify himself. The following, for instance, is a useful account of the real logic of the Nixon foreign policy:

> Détente helped rather than hurt the American defense effort. Before the word détente was even known in America the Congress cut $40 billion from the defense budgets of Nixon's first term; even so dedicated a supporter of American strength as Senator Henry M. Jackson publicly advocated small defense cuts and a "prudent defense posture." After the signing of SALT I, our defense budget increased and the Nixon and Ford administrations put through the strategic weapons (the MX missile, B-1 bomber, cruise missiles, Trident submarines, and more advanced warheads) that even a decade later are the backbone. . . .

Etc., etc. I imagine that paragraph, at least, will be read with consuming interest in Moscow.

This book is a dishonest account of a period in which America's internal politics were debauched (it was the legal system, not the "liberals," that did for Nixon) and its foreign policy became synonymous with dictatorship and aggression. Reading it *really* made me feel sick. There's a lot of talk these days, much of it flatulent, about various "hangovers" of the 1960s. There are a lot of things about the 1960s that I don't miss. But, to judge by the reception accorded this volume, one thing we seem to have lost is the ability to be shocked—morally shocked—by politicians. There has been a dulling of the nerve of outrage. This encourages Kissinger, in the supreme arrogance with which he closes his book, actually to pose the question of whether he was too good for us. (The question should really read: Did we deserve him?) Get hold of *Years of Upheaval*. It deserves, as we say in the trade, the widest possible audience. In its pages, and in the parallel text which Seymour Hersh is supplying, you can see the character of the real totalitarians. The men who frame and blackmail their domestic opponents and murder their foreign ones. The men who believe that nuclear warfare is justified and guerrilla warfare is not. □

## PICASSO'S BLUE PERIOD

blue-grey eyes
your Yugoslavian shirt
sea-water the color of moss agates
cerulean sky

white paper with thin blue lines
the plum-colored bruise on your neck
your name in blue script

borage, flax, forget-me-nots
pale horizon
the blue-green veins in your hand

today the sea is indigo
the hills drift away like smoke
your milky breasts
larkspur, hyacinth
your lips
delphinium

and the sky is full of sapphires

cobalt streets
lilacs, lavender
a blue wash over everything

the ship sails off on an azure field
steel-blue shadows
turquoise fish
under the ashen trees

is that all?

no, the faint blue aura of your smile
tidal pools
aquamarines, lapis lazuli

there are bachelor's-buttons in the garden

is that all?

no, I remember your blue thighs
blue china
treacherous blue-black water

*Jane Flanders*

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# Remissions

EARL ROVIT

ONLY SHORTER. *By Ross Feld. North Point Press. 269 pp. $15.*

Hemingway suggested that there's no special merit in performing an operation without anesthetic, his reason being that life is sufficiently lavish in its offerings of pain that where sedation is possible, humanity can well afford to be humane. But—and this Hemingway also knew—there is a kind of art that is necessarily painful, a kind of art that has to inflict itself on its readers, forcing them to wrestle as with a debilitating fever before they can emerge with their joints aching and their marrow dry. The distinguished *animateur* (and undoubtedly the premier book illustrator of the twentieth century) Alexey Alexieff used to say that life is "wonderful-terrible" and that anyone who would ignore the second adjective is incompetent to register the first. These thoughts came to my mind as I tried to clarify what seems to me extraordinary about Ross Feld's novel *Only Shorter*, the title of which comes from Samuel Beckett's wry reminder that we will all "die one day like any other day, only shorter."

The title is beautifully apt, not only because the novel chronicles the deteriorating life and the death of Judith Kornbluh but because she and her part-time, also cancer-afflicted lover, Jack Richmond, are relatively young, still on the green edge of social responsibility and mature careers. Jack is a management analyst trying to get a foothold in real estate, defiantly square in his attitudes and life style (his first job was as a technical writer for Dow Chemical, and he takes up marijuana only to counter the nausea brought on by his chemotherapy); he is not especially sensitive, intelligent, talented, ambitious or compassionate. He is, in other words, more like you and me than like a character in a novel. Judy, who works at a museum in New York City, is competent enough but—like Jack—clearly not destined for any significant achievement or brilliance.

Both are, if anything, what the smart money would call "losers," more or less interchangeable parts in the proliferating grid of the new professional middle class. With scarcely a wrinkle of change or regret, they could become accountants, personnel administrators, schoolteachers, insurance adjusters or middle-management people.

Jack and Judy's only distinction is that they each become a victim of cancer. They meet in the oncological ward of a New York City hospital; they share several months in which the similarity of their conditions allows them a modicum of gritty comfort in a world where both the healthy and the irreversibly afflicted are alien to them. Jack's cancer goes into remission. Judy dies. And Jack returns to his girlfriend in upstate New York where the novel's action began.

The novel is deftly framed by two falls. In the beginning, Jack falls off a low roof while trying to build a platform for sunbathing. He suffers a broken wrist and establishes a relationship with his attending nurse, Donna. The second fall takes place at the end of the novel, after Judy's death and after some months in which Jack moves lethargically toward recovery. The engine temporarily fails during an open-cockpit plane ride (a birthday present from Donna), and Jack is suddenly aware that he wants desperately to live—even in remission, even though he knows that a remission is not a pardon but a postponement.

Both events are quotidian, commonplace—as are all the characters in the novel, as are all the emotions and motivations of the characters. There is, in other words, a superbly crafted *recognizability* to the scenes—Jack's family home in Bethpage, Long Island, the New York City scenes in hospital rooms and Soho lofts, the upstate college town where Jack works—no charged color, no flamboyance, neither heroic stature nor titillating villainy. And Feld's prose is functionally brilliant—clean, lucid, precise and unobtrusive. Like a freshly washed windowpane, it is scarcely noticeable at all, and it is only afterward that we realize that the style not only frames the scenes we have thoroughly believed in but created them in their entirety.

*Earl Rovit is a novelist who teaches English at the City University of New York.*

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*Only Shorter* is very painful to read, and yet it is unsadistic, unsensational, unmelodramatic. It never exploits its material to make the reader wince or cringe, and the pathos it evokes does not result from that manipulation which parades as an astringent exposure to the cruel realities of life. The pain, I think, comes from a healthier source—a steadfast determination to observe, to record and to focus as narrowly as one can on the shifts of the human spirit under pressures that are inexorable, undramatic and ignoble. One has the impression that as he wrote his novel, Feld never relaxed his attention to the fabric of lives curling up and unraveling before him. Just to see what is really there—not to understand, sympathize, excuse, curse or explain away. To see as an animal might see, even while the human heart harbors its sorrow. And because of Feld's unswerving control, the reader is compelled to share his dispassionate view and, while so engaged, to realize that it is at his own life—not just at Jack's and Judy's—that he gazes.

The novel, thus, does uphold Alexieff's maxim, even though it is weighted more toward the terrible than the wonderful. And yet, one of the traditional functions of fiction is to bring us the news, showing us that *out there* and *back here* may very well be the same place. *Only Shorter* has some heavy news to lay on us, but it's not totally terrible and it rings as true as a gold coin. And that so baleful a truth about ourselves can be expressed and that we can give it welcome—is this not in itself a source of trembling wonder? □


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# Company Town

PAUL JARRICO

THE HOLLYWOOD WRITERS' WARS. *By Nancy Lynn Schwartz. Alfred A. Knopf. 334 pp. $17.95.*

Nancy Schwartz was 22 when she began *The Hollywood Writers' Wars*, and 26 when, a first draft completed, she abruptly died of a brain tumor. The book deals with the conflict between the left and the right in Hollywood during the 1930s and 1940s. One of the many people she interviewed in preparing the book offered her a job as a television writer, which both diverted her from the project and influenced its development. The pleasure she took in "breaking in" seems to have cast a glow of excitement over her view of the past, for the book's emotional focus rests on a relatively small number of Hollywood Reds, my contemporaries, who were young in the late 1930s.

To be fair, Schwartz's fascination with this group of young Communists did not obscure for her the larger perspective. Her intention was to uncover the roots of the blacklist, and she succeeded in doing this. She has given us what show biz now calls a "prequel"—the story behind the story. She allows us to see the jailing of the Hollywood Ten and the banishment of the Hollywood Hundreds not as an aberration but as the logical outgrowth of the economic and political fights that had polarized the film industry for decades.

Here is the birth of the Screen Writers Guild and its long, stubborn campaign for recognition. Here are the violent strikes of the backlot workers as they tried to free their unions from the control of gangsters. Here are the star-studded organizations that rose and fell in the company town in consonance with the political tides of the world outside: the New Deal, Hitler, the Spanish Civil War, the Soviet-Nazi pact and so forth.

Schwartz's material on the guilds and unions is comprehensive and dramatic. Her account of the organizational ups and downs of the special-interest groups is also good. The stuff on the inner workings of the Communist Party, however, is less successful.

The problem, of course, is that informer testimony is, by its nature, unreliable, and there are still a number of honorable survivors who are reluctant to speak freely—even to a historian as bright and engaging as Schwartz was. Some of us did confide in her, but the information we provided was fragmentary and difficult for her to plot along a chronological line. Take the question of the party's influence, limited at best, on the content of films. Schwartz discusses this without reference to the deep division between those in the party who thought we could affect content and those who thought we were kidding ourselves. The film industry was part of the capitalist superstructure, the Zhdanovites declared, and the function of the superstructure was to protect the capitalist base. Q.E.D. There was not only a seesaw on this issue; there were comrades who rode both sides. John Howard Lawson was on the up side, always. That was called leadership.

The point is that Schwartz was not given the kind of help she needed to put the question of content in the proper context—the proper context being the period. Who did what and when?

*Paul Jarrico is a screenwriter who produced* Salt of the Earth.

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My other criticisms are minor. There are too many errors of the kind that copy editors are paid to catch but don't. The one who corrected this manuscript ought to be listed in *Whom's Who*.

This is a vivid and valuable book, nevertheless. The battles it describes are still being fought. They find their current expression in Ed Asner's support of the Salvadoran guerrillas and Charlton Heston's attacks on him. They will continue to reverberate so long as injustice breeds protesters, so long as Hollywood remains a cynosure. The left will continue to renew itself in its Tens and Hundreds. And the neo-McCarthyites will continue to come hunting for heads and headlines. □

# FILMS.

## ROBERT HATCH

**Don's Party**
**Eijanaika**

Except that they are among the most expertly cast, directed and edited movies to come from Australia, Bruce Beresford's *Breaker Morant* in no way resembled his *Getting of Wisdom*, and the current *Don's Party* in no way resembles either of the others. Beresford is now completing a picture starring Robert Duvall that was shot entirely in America, and he is about to start on another for Paramount Pictures. I, for one, will be sorry if he removes himself permanently from Australia's community of vigorous and inventive film makers.

*Don's Party* is exactly what it's name implies. It is election night and the host (John Hargreaves) has invited some friends and acquaintances to come over for drinks and dinner and to watch the returns on TV. Kath (Jeanie Drynan), who has had considerable experience with her husband's notion of hospitality, is irritably wary of the evening ahead. She proves to be an accurate forecaster of stormy weather; Don, a no longer very promising young man, employs his good looks and easy charm to catch people off guard, puncture their protective hypocrisies and set them on one another. His old buddies at such work are Mal (Ray Barrett), a defrocked intellectual who is at daggers drawn with his wife (Pat Bishop), and Mack (Graham Kennedy), who presents the company with a full-


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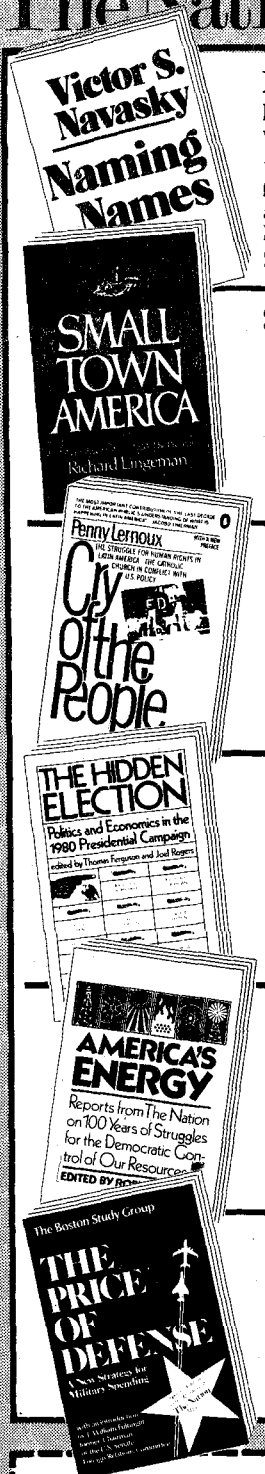
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# Events.

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**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE MORALITY AND LEGALITY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

**FRIDAY, JUNE 4 & SATURDAY, JUNE 5**
**NEW YORK CITY**

**SPEAKERS** (A Partial List)

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**Friday June 4**

United Engineering Center
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**9:30-Noon**—BEARING WITNESS: VOICES OF THE VICTIMS. Victims of nuclear weapons and nuclear development, including survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, atomic soldiers, and Native Americans, will tell their stories.

**2:00-5:00**—EXPERT TESTIMONY. A panel of experts, including doctors, social scientists and physical scientists, will present evidence of the effects of nuclear weapons.

**7:00-9:30**—THE RELEVANCE OF LAW AND MORALITY TO THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. Clergy and lawyers will join to present the issues raised for world survival by the presence of nuclear weapons.

**Saturday June 5**

The Roosevelt Hotel
Madison Avenue at 45th St.
New York, N.Y.

**9:30-Noon**—INTERNATIONAL LAW AND NUCLEAR WEAPONS. A discussion of the illegality of nuclear weapons in international law.

**Noon**—LUNCHEON. Guest Speakers To Be Announced.

**2:30-4:30**—COMMISSIONS. An opportunity for all participants in the Symposium to discuss the issues of nuclear weapons as a threat to democratic freedoms, peace as a basic human right and the roles open to lawyers and citizen activists in combatting nuclear weapons.

**5:00-8:00**—LAW AND DISARMAMENT. At this closing session of the Symposium, reports from the commissions will be heard and recommendations will be agreed upon for presentation to the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament.

***For further information:* International Liaison Office—(212) 749-3810/6620 or The Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy—(212) 877-8962/490-0010**

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length nude photograph of his wife, announcing at the same time that she has just left him. It is Mack's repeated boast that he had encouraged her to seduce his male friends, so that he might photograph the proceedings from a closet. If, as seems likely, the statement is untrue, it is more pathetic than offensive.

The three men punish one another without mercy, but long familiarity has inured them to the malicious banter. Therefore, to enliven the game, Don has invited two pairs of outsiders—an overdressed couple who vote Liberal (the others vote Labor) and a diminutive dentist who speaks in an excessively deep voice and is accompanied by his somewhat flamboyant wife, a fashionable painter, of whom he is hair-trigger jealous. A late arrival is Cooley, a lawyer with a neat mustache and faint brogue who makes a practice of setting people's teeth on edge and has brought along a lightly clad 19-year-old to assist in the festivities.

Each new arrival raises the emotional pitch. As the night wears on and the drinks circulate, the kaleidoscope of relationships spins more rapidly and the behavior grows more outrageous. Much of it is funny, much appalling; from time to time there are moments of tenderness, understanding and bleak confession. The war between the sexes, which extends to sex itself, is overt—male chauvinism is ostentatiously piggish—and the wives contemplate their mates with real contempt. Yet in the morning, when the celebrants have gone and Don is walking through his garden picking up empty beer cans, Kath calls out "come to bed," and it seems a kind of absolution.

*Don's Party* has not much of a story to tell, nor I think much advice to give. It is a study of middle-class doldrums, of bright people disappointed in themselves, feeding on one another and finding the diet indigestible. It ought to be depressing but, quite irrationally, it is so well done that it raises one's spirits. The film is based on a play by David Williamson, who wrote the screen adaptation.

If *Don's Party*, however exaggerated, triggers personal memories that might more comfortably be forgotten, Shohei Imamura's *Eijanaika* sends one for comparisons back to the children's crusades and St. Vitus epidemics of the Middle Ages in Europe. In fact, though, the distinguished Japanese director (*Vengeance is Mine*, *The Insect Woman*, *The Pornographers*) is recreating a relatively recent segment of his country's history. In the late 1860s, Japan was lurching toward a revolution. (More accurately, it was on the verge of a coup, with the insubordinate Satsuma and Choshu clans challenging the absolute power of the Tokugawa Shogunate.) The times were bad: country people flooded into the cities, where food was scarce; only beggars and thieves found employment, and vice flourished in the absence of authority.

The corrupt and aging retainers of the Shogun were especially baffled by a frenzy that had seized the populace. Shouting "*Eijanaika!*" (which translates as "Why Not?", "Who Cares?" or "What the Hell!"), mobs of the homeless, starving but for the most part drunken were careering through Kyoto, Osaka, Yokohama and Edo (now Tokyo), dressed in fantastic rags, their faces painted and powdered, dancing, singing, fornicating and laughing at death. Rumors of religious miracles kept the roisterers whirling through the streets, pornographic sideshows gladdened their spirits and the anti-Shogunite forces fanned the flames, the better to confound the agents of law and order.

So much for historical background—which I confess is as new to me as it may be to many readers. Into this brilliantly cinematic bedlam, Imamura injects his Enoch Arden-like romance. Genji (Shigeru Izumiya), a peasant youth, was shipwrecked off Yokohama, picked up by an American vessel and carried to California. The new world suits him well enough, but the memory of his bride, Iné, calls him home, and after six years he returns. He is promptly clapped into jail on suspicion of being a Christian, then escapes and makes his way to his native village. There he learns that Iné's destitute family has sold her into prostitution. He traces her to East Ryogoku, where he finds her performing an act called "Tickle the Goddess," an ingenious bit of vicarious sex play that might catch on in our own sporting rooms.

East Ryogoku is a carnival town, a center for thieves, pimps, freaks, beggars and *agents provocateurs* on both sides of the power struggle. Genji, smart, agile and with a useful smattering of English, is soon deep in the affairs of the place, seeking quick money

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to take himself and his wife back to California. He gets it soon enough, but she proves irresolute; she loves Genji, so she says, but she is also wedded to the life of porn star and mistress to the local boss. (I need hardly add that Kaori Momoi, who plays the part, is a beautiful and quite lively woman.)

If you try to follow the details of the crowded and swirling plot, you will probably get lost. That will happen, in part, because Imamura retains the panoramic scope of his film by continually and abruptly cutting back and forth among simultaneously developing episodes, and, in part, because all the elegant contenders for power are so corrupt, devious and bloodthirsty that it is almost impossible to determine who is manipulating which bit of wickedness. What is always evident, however, is that the polished, soft-spoken aristocrats pull the strings and the proletariat, specifically Genji and his crowd, dance the steps. It is when they begin dancing on their own, and will not be stopped, that the picture rises up like a great wave and breaks across the screen.

Imamura says of the movie, "I wanted to observe how the masses at the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, in a kind of uneasy situation similar to that existing today, lived, acted, thought and died while idolizing freedom." That is a sobering thought, and brings to mind TV shots of today's young men and women snake-dancing by the thousands through the streets of Tokyo.

*Eijanaika* is persistently absorbing, even when one becomes lost in its maze. Imamura paints mystery and pageantry with equal felicity; the picture swings smoothly from elegant interiors half-hidden in shadow to the noise and dirt of squalid merriment, from silhouettes scurrying by lantern light on desperate errands to vast eruptions of desperate humanity running amok in the white glare of summer. "Who cares?" is a horrible slogan; yet it has evoked a splendid film. *Eijanaika* is being shown at the Film Forum in New York City until June 1. □

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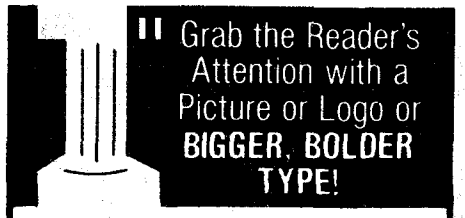


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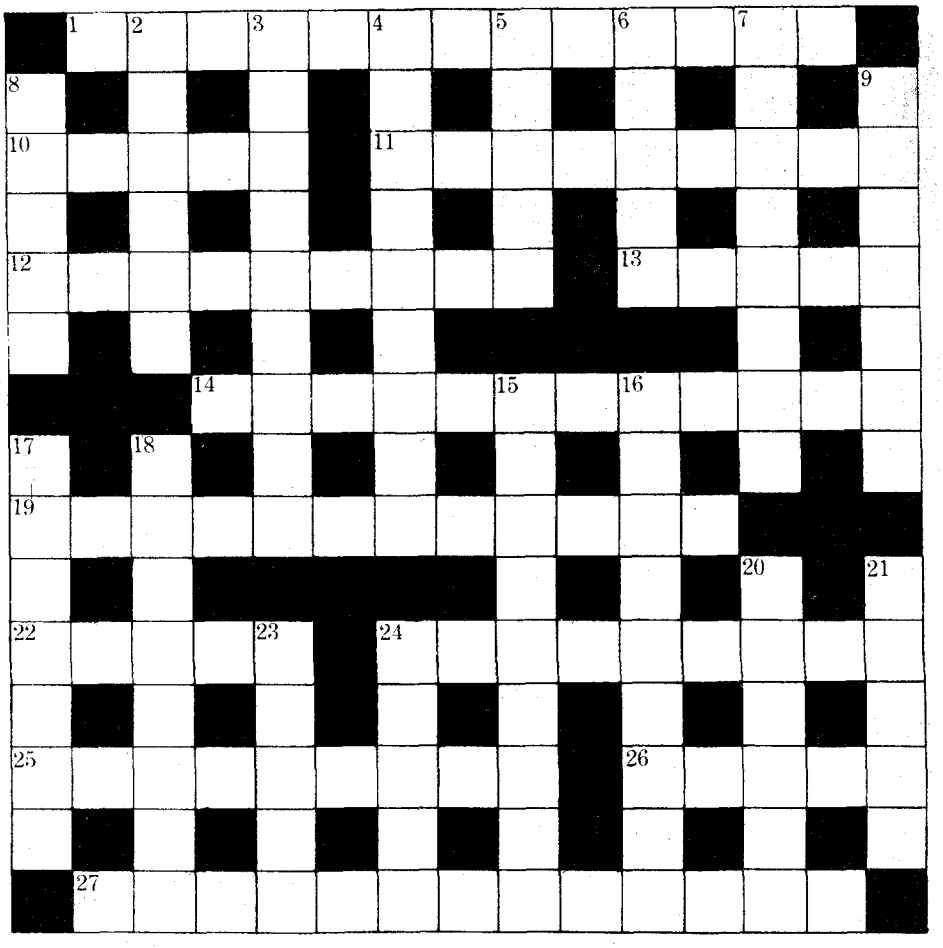

ACROSS

1 Blue flag of Fringillidae? (6,7)
10 A short month, and in France you might hear Mendelssohn's. (5)
11 Might be a near relative of John Hay, but that's part of the game. (9)
12 and 22 Antediluvian and relatively dry. (6,3,5)
13 Often old and the same as a place of business. (5)
14 Possibly marked down because marked up? (7,5)
19 There's usually an object in using a verb so. (12)
22 See 12 across
24 Vital pains, just below the nose? (9)
25 In the middle of earth-shaking events. (9)
26 This man must be satisfied. (5)
27 The sort of piano to come to if you refer to "cuckoo" or "whippoorwill." (13)

DOWN

2 Inform someone of tiny fractures. (6)
3 Pauses to bury a Bulgar head down, perhaps. (9)
4 Precious black-hearted sort of bard to find around. (5,1'3)
5 Referring to title, this sugar is sometimes given to the government; the reason is unclear, to start with. (5)
6 The pro kind are full of objections. (5)
7 His is a telling profession. (8)
8 The crew's mission sometimes was accomplished when they were away. (5)
9 The directions are missing a point with this dish, being Scandinavian. (7)
15 Listen—but only if the roof caves in! (9)
16 Put on the sort of coat calculated to startle into sudden activity? (9)
17 Take the chair—you'll find it's easy if over this. (7)
18 The theory that Shakespeare is hammy? (8)
20 Hans is found up and around in China. (6)
21 A lot of interest is taken in this. (5)
23 Unlike 10, Mendelssohn's must have been written in August. (5)
24 Musical totem—one of those French words and music bits. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1917

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